Jan/Feb 1984 Number 67

Space Gamer

The Magazine of Science Fiction Gaming

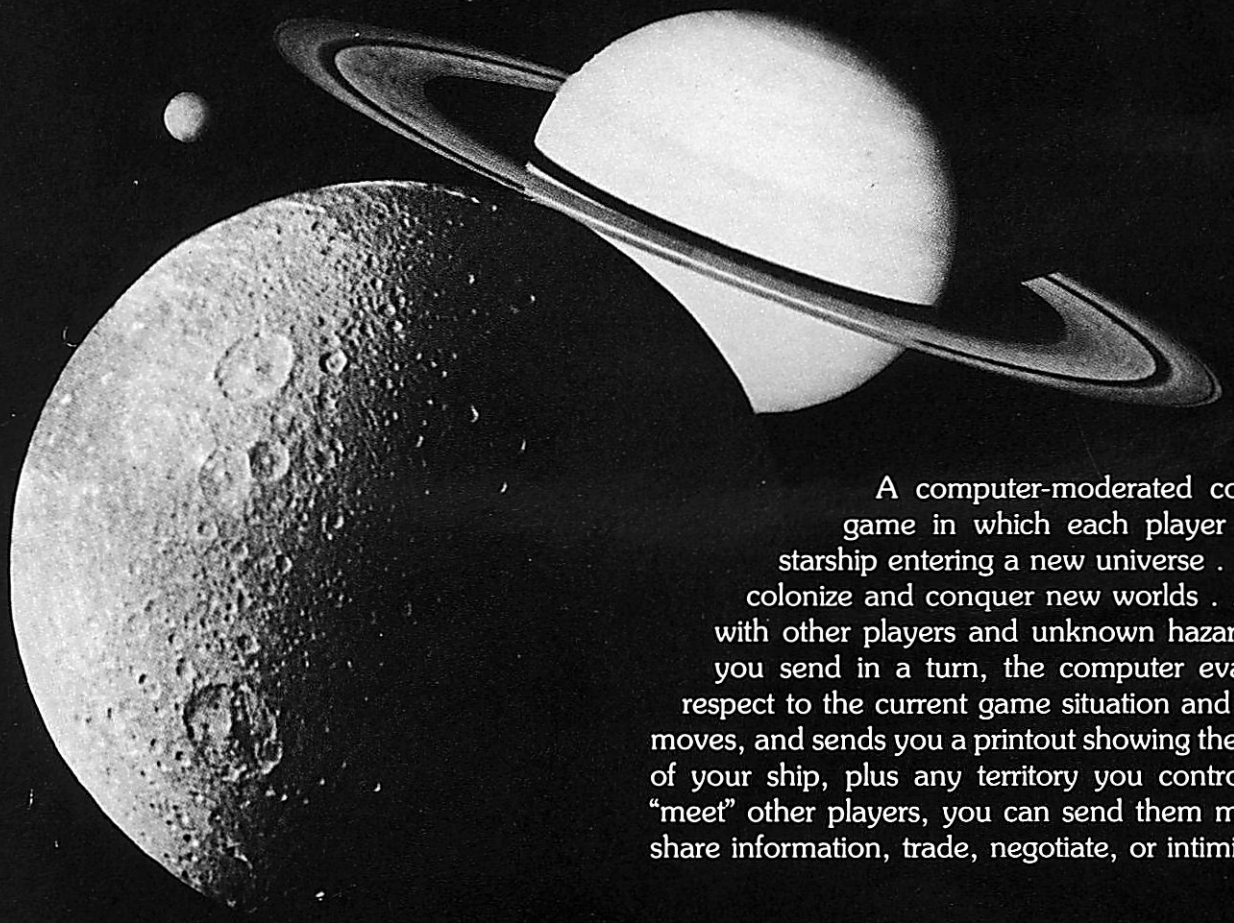
$3.00

CAN YOU SURVIVE THE *Interdiction Station...*
A GENERIC SF-RPG SCENARIO

ORBIT WAR
ADVANCED RULES AND DESIGNER'S NOTES

FEATURED REVIEWS
JAMES BOND 007
MSPE
ESPIONAGE!
NEW PBM COLUMN — "KEEPING POSTED"
AND 5 PAGES OF CAPSULES

UNIVERSE III



A computer-moderated correspondence game in which each player commands a starship entering a new universe . . . to explore, colonize and conquer new worlds . . . contending with other players and unknown hazards! Each time you send in a turn, the computer evaluates it with respect to the current game situation and other players' moves, and sends you a printout showing the current status of your ship, plus any territory you control. When you "meet" other players, you can send them messages – to share information, trade, negotiate, or intimidate.

Why is UNIVERSE III the "state-of-the-art" in play-by-mail games?

SIMPLICITY – No complicated "codes" to learn – you tell us in plain English what you want to do and we send you the results!

NO WAITING TO ENTER – Entries are processed on receipt. You'll be in a game within two weeks or your money back.

NO WAITING TO PLAY – Our turn system lets you move every week if you like – or take as long as you want between turns. Your results will generally be in the mail to you the same day we receive your orders!

NO DEADLINES – Since you set your own "turn length," you can't miss a turn!

NO EXTRA CHARGES – Our fee is $3.50 per ship or colony turn. We don't tack on extra fees for combat.

NO BIG DEPOSITS – Our entry fee is only $11.00, which covers a setup for one ship, a copy of the rulebook, and your first two turns.

UNIVERSE III is waiting for you. Your starship will be assigned as soon as you send your name, address, and entry fee to:

CENTRAL TEXAS COMPUTING
710-S SOUTHWEST TOWER, AUSTIN, TX 78701

Space Gamer

Number 67
Jan/Feb 1984

Editor: Christopher Frink
Assistant Editor: Richard Steinberg
News Editor: Scott Haring
Contributing Editors: W.G. Armintrout
William A. Barton
Ronald Pehr

Publisher: Steve Jackson
Editor-In-Chief: Warren Spector
Art Director: Pat Mueller
Assistant Art Director: Richard Steinberg
Production Manager: Monica Stephens
Production Artist: C. Mara Lee

Business Manager: Pat Conteen
Advertising Manager: Gerald D. Swick
Circulation Manager: Creede Lambard

ART IN THIS ISSUE

Cover: Dexter Dickinson.

Line Art: Bob Barger: 38. Paul Jaquays: 36. Kim Strombo: 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29. J.D. Webster: mailer cover. Mel. White: 40.

Photographs and Game Art: Blade/Flying Buffalo: 11. Game Designers' Workshop: 31. Games Workshop: 32. Hero Games: 11. Steve Jackson Games: 33, 35. Tactical Templates: 2. Victory Games: 18, 20.

ADVENTURE SUPPLEMENT

Interdiction Station * Marcus L. Rowland
Planet Malen had to be protected from the universe . . . but it was getting harder all the time! 21

ARTICLES

***Orbit War* Designer's Notes * Wallace Wang** 5
***Orbit War* Developer's Notes * Steve Jackson** 6
***Orbit War* Advanced Rules * Steve Jackson**
Bigger and better space battles 7

REVIEWS

***Deep Space Navigator* * Tony Watson**
Featured review of Tactical Templates' game of ship-to-ship combat 2
Spy Vs. Spy Vs. Spy * W.G. Armintrout
Comparative review of TSR's ***Top Secret***, Hero Games' ***Espionage!***, and Blade/Flying Buffalo's ***Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes*** 11
***James Bond 007* * Aaron Allston**
Bond is back — and Victory Games has got him! 18
Capsule Reviews 31
GAMES: ***Traveller Starter Edition, Silo 14, Judge Dredd.*** **SUPPLEMENTS:** ***Armadillo Autoduel Arena, Knight Hawks.*** **PLAY AIDS:** ***MSPE Character Folder.*** **COMPUTER GAMES:** ***Voyager I.*** **PERIODICALS:** *Autoduel Quarterly.*

COLUMNS

Letters 36
Where We're Going * Steve Jackson 38
Murphy's Rules * Ben Sargent, Kim Strombo 39
Counter Intelligence * Christopher Frink 40
Keeping Posted * W.G. Armintrout
A Gentle Art: Human-Moderated PBMs 42
PBM Update 44

SCANNER

News Briefs 41
Convention Calendar 41
New & Upcoming Releases 41
Advertisers' Index 44

Most game names are trademarks of the companies publishing those games. In particular: *Dungeons & Dragons* and *Top Secret* are trademarks of TSR Hobbies, Inc.; *Deep Space Navigator*, of Tactical Templates; *Espionage!*, of Hero Games; *James Bond 007: Role-Playing in Her Majesty's Secret Service* (and all supplements), of Victory Games; *Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes*, of Blade (a division of Flying Buffalo); and *Traveller*, of Game Designers' Workshop. Use of a trademark to identify a product commented on in this magazine should not be construed as implying the sponsorship of the trademark holder. All names of games published by Steve Jackson Games are trademarks of Steve Jackson Games, or used under license by Steve Jackson Games. Use of the name for any product without mention of trademark status should not be construed as a challenge to such status.

SPACE GAMER (ISSN 0194-9977, USPS 434-250) is published bi-monthly by Steve Jackson Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760-8957. Second class postage paid at Austin, TX. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760-8957.
All material is copyright © 1984 by Steve Jackson Games. All rights reserved.
Printed in U.S.A. by Futura Press, Austin.
Subscription rates, effective 5/15/83: In the United States — 6 months (3 issues) $8; one year (6 issues) $13; 2 years (12 issues) $23. A lifetime subscription is $200. In Canada, add 50¢ per issue for postage and handling; for addresses outside the U.S. and Canada, add $1 per issue for surface mail. International rates subject to change as postal rates change. *Note:* All payments MUST be in U.S. dollars, made by International Money Order, or checks drawn on a U.S. or Canadian bank.

MEMBER OF GAMA THE GAME MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION

Featured Review

DEEP SPACE NAVIGATOR

by Tony Watson

Deep Space Navigator is a new science fiction boardgame from a new company, Tactical Templates of Liburn, Georgia. Designer Jim Craig has dealt with some familiar material in a relatively novel way. Still, it's not entirely evident that this approach is as innovative as Mr. Craig would have us believe in some of the text appearing in the rules. (At one point the rules read: "You'll wonder, 'Why didn't someone think of this fantastic idea sooner?'") Many elements of *Deep Space Navigator* will be readily recognizable to aficionados of the genre. It is a tactical space game of ship to ship combat. Ships fire a variety of beams and missiles at one another. Movement is by vector, that is, the current velocity and direction of a ship's movement directly affect its future movement.

What is different about *DSN*, and certainly its best point, is the manner in which these game mechanics are handled. The innovation is not in the game's situation or mechanics, both of which are well-trodden territory, but the tools employed to simulate them. The game dispenses with the traditional accoutrements of counters, hexgrid and charts, and instead replaces them with paper, pen and – most important of all – a very versatile plastic template that is used to calculate movement and combat. Use of the template eliminates the need for hexes to determine movement or firing ranges, and it also serves to calculate combat odds and damage inflicted.

With all of these functions performed by a single game component, one might expect the parts list for *DSN* to be a bit spare, and as it turns out, this is the case. The parts included are an eight-page rules booklet, illustrated with examples of play; the 6½" x 4" template; two ship design pads, ten asteroid sheets, and a 12-sided die. The game is packaged in a sturdy box, which is decorated with a cover photograph of marginal attractiveness. The game designer, who undertook the photographic task himself, should certainly be credited for trying something different; unfortunately, his picture of two fellows in tin foil suits standing around a holo tank with the game's title sprawled out below in *Star Wars* style struck me as something one might see in an ad for a bad science fiction film.

Deep Space Navigator retails for $14.50, and with the absence of a set of counters and a mapsheet, one turns to the template to justify the cost. This rectangle of flexible plastic is quite busy, with most of its surface devoted to either a printed field for movement and combat calculations, or cut out symbols, such as circles, squares, ovals and hexagons which are used to denote special circumstances on the play area. There is a substantial amount of information squeezed onto this tool.

Next in importance are the starship design sheets, which are used to record information, such as the configuration of a ship, damage it has taken, and fuel use. There are two sorts of ships – fighters and star destroyers – with space for two ships per sheet. The 12-sided die is of good quality, Gamescience manufacture, although the players will have to ink in the numbers themselves. All in all, the components are nice, but the game seems a bit overpriced for what you get. This may be due to the template; such a specialized item may be rather expensive to produce.

Once one gets the hang of using the template, and has negotiated the sometimes ambiguous rules, the game plays quite smoothly. Players begin by designing their starships, which is not quite as interesting as it might sound. Differentiation between ships is a result of the *placement* of attributes rather than their mix. The star destroyer design sheet comprises a series of four concentric rings of twelve sections each around a central circle divided among the fuel tank and bridge, which are permanently placed, as are the two engines directly to their rear. In the remaining 48 spaces, or "compartments," as the rules refer to them, are placed 20 shield units, ten armor (both, quite obviously, defensive in nature), and weapons, specifically, two lasers, a photon beam, an ion cannon, and a pair of nuclear missiles.

Placement doesn't matter a whole lot in the case of weapons, since their location has no effect on their ability to fire. However, it's a given that the offensive systems should be placed within the defensive rings afforded by the armor and shields. Placement of defensive systems takes a bit more thought. If the player expects to take more hits from the front, or plans on tactics that emphasize head-on attacks, then placing shields and armor forward is a good idea. Fighters are configured along similar lines, but the player has only defensive systems to distribute.

Play in the basic scenario begins with each player taking a destroyer and entering on opposite sides of a piece of paper. No size for this playing field is specified; a single sheet of unlined paper cramps things. Two such sheets, taped together from the back, provide a more suitable area. Scenario context is nil; the players are to engage each other's star destroyer, with the last surviving ship the winner. The advanced scenario is essentially the same, with fighters tossed in and the optional use of asteroid sheets (provided with the game) to add some "terrain" to the play area.

Movement, or navigation as the rules put it, utilizes the template and a narrow-tipped felt pen (not provided). It is vector in nature. Vector movement is nothing new; GDW's *Triplanetary* and *Mayday* both use a form of vector movement and SPI's ambitious *Battlefleet Mars* expanded the concept to three dimensions. However, in *DSN* it seems to work especially well. Space doesn't have a hexgrid imposed upon it, so the absence of one in this game seems much more accurate, while the use of the template to determine and lay courses has much more feel to it. Plotting the course with the template and then connecting the position points seems

Are you good enough to be the world's most famous secret agent?

Enter the Victory Games World of

JAMES BOND 007

Role Playing In Her Majesty's Secret Service

OCTOPUSSY ADVENTURE MODULE — All the major characters, exotic locations, and excitement of the latest film are brought to life — with an unexpected twist or two to test your skills and wits.

GOLDFINGER ADVENTURE MODULE — An adventure based on the motion picture, lets you track down clues about the mysterious "Goldfinger" and pit your character's abilities against the villainous "Odd Job".

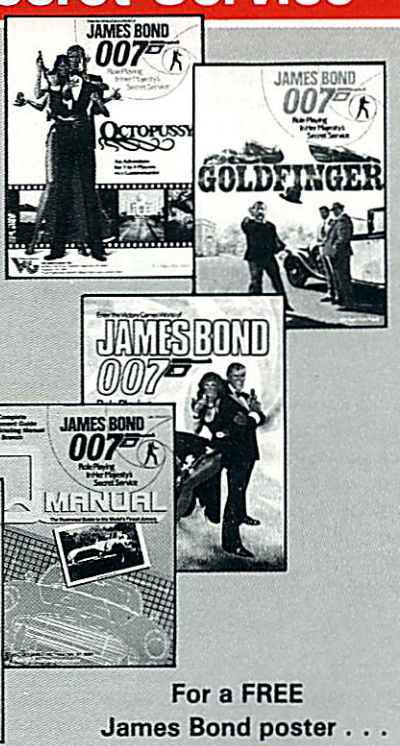
BASIC SET — The complete James Bond 007 Game players' package includes The Basic Game book, 12 Character Records, two 6-sided dice and two 10-sided dice.

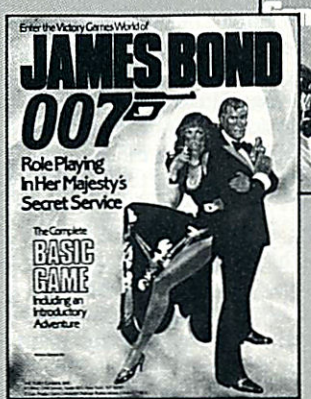
Q MANUAL — With over 150 illustrations, this supplement includes weapons, vehicles and covert devices, plus other items you can use on a mission.

GAMESMASTER PACK — This exciting package is designed expressly for the James Bond 007 Gamesmaster and brings the excitement of all the movies into the home — every day and any day! Characters like Jaws, Odd Job, Felix Leiter, Anya Amasova, and James Bond himself come to life in full-color figures that are used during play.

BASIC GAME — The Basic Game book includes all rules for the James Bond 007 Game. An introductory adventure teaches you the rules while getting right into the action.

Adventure Modules contain a fully illustrated Gamesmaster Guide and an Agent Briefing Dossier with 8 Mission Information Sheets, contained in a replica of an M.I.6 envelope.




JAMES BOND 007
Role Playing In Her Majesty's Secret Service
The Complete BASIC GAME Including an Introductory Adventure

For a FREE James Bond poster . . .

(allow 6 to 8 weeks for delivery . . . offer available only in continental U.S.) Send $1.00 to cover postage & handling to:

Victory Games

43 West 33rd Street, New York, NY 10001

Exclusive Foreign Distributors: UK: AVALON HILL GAMES, 650 High Road, North Finchley, London N12 ONL, England, telephone 01-445 3044 **AUSTRALIA:** JEDKO GAMES, 18 Fonceca Street, Mordialloc 3195, Victoria, Australia, telephone (03) 580 9955 **JAPAN:** POST HOBBY, 26-5, 5-Chome, Sendagaya, Shibuya-Ku, Tokyo, Japan, telephone (379) 4081

©Danjaq S.A. (1961) ©Eon Productions Limited/Glidrose Publications Limited (1983)

much closer to the job a starship's navigation crew would do (although one would expect a computer would replace the template and pencil . . .).

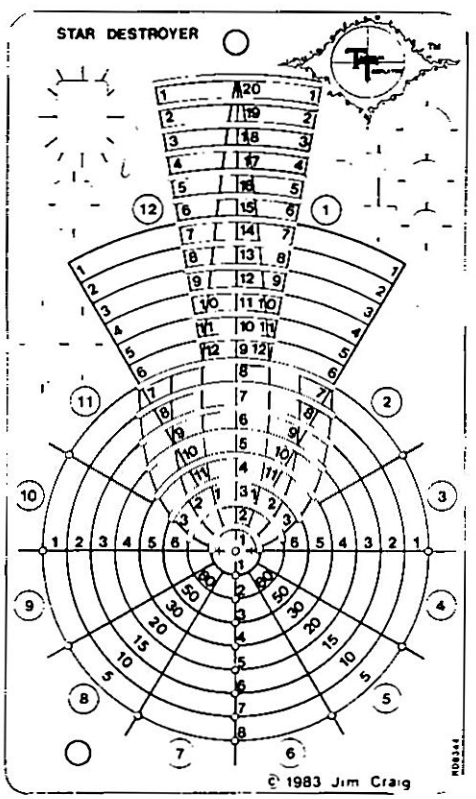
The navigation system is very simple. A central point on the template is placed over the ship's present position. Tracing along the line between the present and past position marks will reveal the ship's speed, and extrapolating forward will indicate the projected position. This can be altered by a course change of up to four units (about an eighth of an inch), either faster, slower or to either side. The new course is drawn in, with the end point serving as the new position.

Fuel consumption is an additional factor in movement. A simple table gives the fuel unit use per change of course; the greater the change, the greater the fuel use. Fuel use *can* become a problem late in a game if one ship has to conserve fuel and can thus be out-maneuvered. Generally, however, fuel use is not much of a concern.

The system works smoothly, save for a couple of glitches. First, there are some unrealistic limits on speed. Terminal velocity is set at eight, although the template could have handled velocities of up to 20, and there seems to be no grounds in physics for this limitation. Similarly, there is a minimum speed of one, even more incomprehensible from a realism standpoint. Presumably, these starships come to a stop sometime, so why can they not execute this option in combat? Second, the template is not set up to handle "backwards" movement, so this is arbitrarily ruled out. Thus, if you have a ship moving along a vector at a velocity of one, that ship cannot apply its maneuver of four in the opposite direction and wind up going three in that opposite direction. No suitable rationale is offered for these problems, and they tend to mar the game's pretensions to a workable system for simulating Newtonian movement.

Combat can take place either before or after movement, at the player's option. The template serves admirably to delineate the fields of fire for beam weapons, their chances to hit at a given range, and the amount of damage caused at that range. The ion cannon does the most damage and has the longest range, but the most restricted field of fire. Photon beams have a shorter range but a wider, forward field of fire, while lasers can fire a full 360° but only for a relatively short distance and at light damage. For beam combat, the template is used to make sure the target is in the field of fire and determine the chance to hit. If the die roll indicates a hit, the appropriate amount of damage is applied to the target. Exactly which compartments are hit is found by using the template to see which of twelve position sectors were in the angle of attack.

Application of damage is a bit problematic if you have the recently issued sheet of rules changes. The rules section for shields has been totally replaced by the changes, but this only muddles things since it isn't clear how shields can be destroyed (use of the old rule for this aspect is suggested). In general, shields absorb five points of damage, with excess damage bleeding off into compartments further into the core. Armor also soaks up damage but, unlike shields, can't regenerate. It usually takes several hits in a given sector to eliminate the defenses, exposing the weapons, bridge or fuel tank in that sector. These items are easily disabled if struck, and in the case of the fuel tank, a hit destroys the entire ship.



a reduced version of the *Deep Space Navigator* template

Nuclear missiles are launched and moved like ships, but are much faster. Missiles detonate after only two turns and cause great amounts of damage, depending on the target's distance to the center of the explosion. They are certainly the most powerful weapon in the game, but each destroyer is restricted to only two.

The *DSN* rules have been augmented with a page of rules changes. If you have a copy of the game and don't have these changes, write Tactical Templates for a copy. The additions are fairly extensive, if a bit unclear, and change the game to a considerable degree.

What then is the final verdict on *Deep Space Navigator*? After consideration of its strengths and weaknesses, I found the game to be disappointing. This is not so much because of weaknesses in the rules, although these are present (as in the movement system quirks described above and the confusion caused by the original shield rule and its less than complete replacement), but because the game simply does not go far enough in its efforts to simulate its subject. Elements that could have been covered or expanded are left frustratingly incomplete. For example, players will quickly become aware of the fact that there are no provisions for the effect of planets or moons on ship movement. Sure, the game is called *Deep Space Navigator*, but that seems a poor reason for ignoring such factors. This is very strange; one might expect most ship encounters to take place within a system and very likely near a world. The omission of rules for planets and gravity limits the game's potential for reproducing battles from books or movies, or as a tie-in with a role-playing game. Simple rules for gravity could have been extrapolated from the existing mechanics, but for some reason the designer chose not to do this.

Similarly, the game could have been made better by expanding the scenario and ship design sections. The scenarios are laughable; each player takes a ship and it's a battle to the death, which is hardly a scenario at all. The game could have included scenarios based on themes: piracy, blockade running, rescue, raid, and so on. These would have produced more interesting situations, and victory conditions more sophisticated than the mere destruction of the enemy. The ship design rules represent some real potential left untapped. If the design rules had been expanded from mere placement of components to their selection, perhaps by means of a point/cost system, the door would have been open to true ship design. Real differentiation between ships would have been possible, ship classes based on points could have been added, and so on. Now, certainly, players of the game can work up some sort of point value for the various ship components, but this seems like something the designers should have taken the effort to provide.

Deep Space Navigator's template is a novel addition to the standard panoply of game components, but alone, it's not enough to carry this title. If the designers had followed through on their work, *DSN* could have been a very good game. As it is, it is naggingly incomplete, and can't be recommended.

DEEP SPACE NAVIGATOR (Tactical Templates – 4567 Town Crier Road, Liburn, Georgia 30247); $14.50. Designed by Jim Craig. One 8-page rulebook, ten 8½" x 11" asteroid sheets, ten ship design pads, a 12-sided die, and a 6½" x 4" plastic template. Playing time from one to two hours. For two or more players. Published 1983. **SG**

ORBIT WAR

Designer's Notes by Wallace Wang

When you wish upon a star
Then you wonder who you are
When you wish upon a star
Your dreams come true.
– Leigh Harline, Nev Washington, and Paul J. Smith

Peace in our time!
–Neville Chamberlain

The next war will not be decided on the ground by battle tanks, on the oceans by supercarriers, or in the air by fighter aircraft. The next war, like all previous wars, will focus on gathering intelligence through reconnaissance. Foreknowledge, wrote Sun Tzu in *The Art of War*, is "the reason the enlightened Prince and the wise General conquer the enemy whenever they move."

Intelligence will continue to play a crucial role in warfare. Satellites, equipped with cameras sensitive enough to photograph a man's face, have superseded aircraft in the reconnaissance role. The Soviet Union and the United States rely heavily on these satellites to monitor the other's armed forces. Although such reconnaissance satellites provide invaluable information, they are the most vulnerable link in both countries' defense intelligence systems.

To overcome this vulnerability, the Soviet Union and the United States are investing vast sums of money for advanced laser research. For the immediate future, both sides are perfecting more conventional weapons. The Soviet Union frequently tests "suicide" satellites which explode on command, spraying a target with shrapnel. The United States is developing a three-stage, anti-satellite missile small enough to be fired from high-flying F-15 aircraft. The introduction of weaponry in space is not only feasible, but likely to become a reality before the end of the decade.

The first war in the sky began when reconnaissance aircraft started firing on one another. Previously, these aircraft had co-existed in relative peace. Like those first warplanes, today's reconnaissance satellites pass one another without incident. However, all this will change with the introduction of more advanced laser technology. Lasers promise to revolutionize space as drastically as the synchronized machine gun forever shattered the peace of the sky. The next war will be decided in space.

The primary objective of war is to control the battlefield. Control is especially critical in space – a nation denied control will be defenseless before a nuclear onslaught. Never before has failure to control threatened complete annihilation for the losing side. In previous wars, failure to control the battlefield meant retreat. Today, with nuclear missiles able to strike targets within minutes, there will be no place to run.

Tactics

Satellites in ***Orbit War*** represent sophisticated pawns positioned on a two-dimensional region of space. The technicalities of satellite warfare have been abstracted into simple movement and combat rules, allowing players to concentrate on the strategic aspects of the game. Like chess, combat in ***Orbit War*** depends not only on the strength of the attacker, but on the attacker's location as well.

The Orbit Lines represent the effect of gravity on satellites at varying distances from the Earth. Mastery of the Orbit Lines is essential to victory. In contrast to any other form of warfare, satellite warfare will be extremely dynamic in nature. Ships may dock in harbors and aircraft may park in hangars, but satellites will be in constant motion in times of peace *and* war. One wrong move may prove fatal. If the effects of Orbital Movement are not understood, any miscalculation could scatter satellites helplessly across the map.

In addition to mastery of the Orbit Lines, the importance of initial satellite placement must be emphasized. Satellites must congregate into task forces to protect the weaker units and support one another. While a lone satellite is easily destroyed, a well-coordinated satellite task force can be invulnerable.

We are at all times ready for war
to protect the peace.
–Rear Admiral Chester Ward (Ret.)

Satellite combat will prove quick and decisive. It will not be necessary to destroy a satellite with exotic weaponry; a handful of well-placed gravel has the same effect against a moving satellite as a 20mm cannon has against a tar-paper shack. In either case, the destruction will be complete.

What separates satellite combat from more conventional combat is the speed at which the combatants will move. Whereas in modern warfare the combatants may have several minutes to respond to an attack, satellite warfare reaction time must be measured in seconds. Although today's guided missiles are capable of performing the intense calculations necessary to intercept ballistic warheads in space, the real breakthrough will come with the introduction of the first satellite laser system.

Able to strike with lightning-like effect and pinpoint accuracy, lasers are well suited for space combat where the targets are small and fast. A laser of the future need not be strong enough to blast an enemy into oblivion; it needs only enough power to selectively wound a target. In the hostile environment of space where every system of a satellite must work perfectly just to maintain it in orbit, a crippling hit will prove as good as a solid kill.

Units

Future satellites, unlike today's, will not be "clay pigeons in orbit." Each satellite will be nuclear powered and expose no vulnerable parts such as solar panels found in earlier satellite designs. Each will be protected with light-weight composite armor which acts like steel plating at a fraction of the weight. Each will possess the most sophisticated computer tracking systems ever made. Able to perform calculations in milliseconds that would have previously taken an entire roomful of computers hours to do, these next-generation computer brains will have reasoning abilities far in excess of normal machines.

In much the same way that aircraft have evolved from all-purpose contraptions to specialized fighting machines, satellites will also undergo this evolutionary stage. The simplest and most familiar satellite of the future will be advanced versions of today's Early Warning Reconnaissance satellites (EWR).

Equipped with cameras and delicate sensing instruments, EWRs will have little or no room available for weaponry and are the most vulnerable satellites. In ***Orbit War***, they are expensive but also invaluable towards victory. A force of EWR satellites, within an enemy's spotting cone, can rack up victory points with much less risk than a nuclear strike. Replacement EWRs are best deployed in deep space as this allows them to enter the game quickly.

The next logical satellite type would be a defensive satellite. Such a satellite, represented in the game as a Communications Jamming Satellite (CJS), could protect other satellites by throwing an electronic jamming "fog" around itself. While such satellites would lack offensive capabilities, such a design could easily be placed in orbit in the next few years while avoiding the ethical questions regarding the placement of weapons in space.

The next evolutionary step would be the first attack satellite. Such a satellite, represented in the game as the Orbital Weapons Platform (OWP), would employ conventional missiles operating much like today's long-range Phoenix anti-aircraft missiles. The main drawback of an OWP-type satellite would be its arsenal. In combat an OWP satellite would quickly deplete its arsenal and would require additional supplies to maintain its effectiveness.

Overcoming the problems of supply would be the futuristic generation of Hunter-Killer satellites (HK) armed with the first laser systems. As the name suggests, such satellites would be heavily armed and armored, enabling them to aggressively seek out and destroy any hostile force. While expensive to build, HK satellites are an absolute necessity to insure victory in space.

The Human Element

Though computers will master the battlefield of space, human combat units will continue to play an important role in war, for nothing will ever replace the cognitive abilities of the human brain.

The first manned combat units will be modified descendents of today's Space Shuttle. Like

the EWR satellites, Shuttles will be extremely vulnerable, as they must not only protect themselves but their human crews as well. Special Forces Infantry (SF) units would suffer the same disadvantages. However, the strength of human units will lie in their versatility in combat.

In the game, satellites may not attack the same turn they are discharged from a rocket, reflecting the fact that satellites must first orient themselves in orbit before they may do anything else. Human units would not need such an adjustment period and are allowed special attack privileges. Such an advantage is most useful in breaking orbital blockades. A shuttle, combined with an SF unit and missiles, can punch through almost any orbital blocking force and emerge victorious.

The likeliest scenario to occur in the future would be a blockade of space. The Soviet Union and the United States are working feverishly to develop an orbiting laser capable of knocking out nuclear warheads in space. Whichever side can put such a weapon in orbit will hold an awesome advantage. A space blockade, then, would be an attempt to keep that advantage – at almost any cost.

A satellite defense system will not bring peace to the world nor will it render ballistic missiles obsolete. Instead, such a satellite defense system is more likely to heighten rivalries and further fuel the arms race. In such a tense environment, either side would desperately maneuver to obtain any advantage, whether it be in the form of an assassination attempt or a pre-emptive strike. If either side let their defenses down for even a moment, an enemy might be quick to seize the advantage before it was too late.

Orbit War was designed as a precise, mathematical contest of nerves and skillful maneuvering. The complexities of satellite warfare will work against both sides in organizing their own forces, let alone attacking those of the enemy. Hence, in *Orbit War*, players alternate who moves first every other turn. With this rule, neither side is forced to always move first (and at a disadvantage) or always move second.

Orbit War is an extrapolation of present technology projected into the future. While the exact details of satellite warfare may never be known, *Orbit War* allows players to experience a future space war which may occur within our lifetimes. Hopefully, none of the game scenarios will prove prophetic and become historical scenarios, but the way things are going . . .

Reagan Pressed on Space 'Shield'

Urged to Start Program to Intercept Warheads

WASHINGTON – President Reagan, who called last March for using outer space to build an impregnable shield against nuclear missiles, is now under mounting pressure to decide whether to actually commit the nation to such a program...

Reagan said the effort "holds the promise of changing the course of human history."

–Los Angeles Times, October, 1983

ORBIT WAR

Developer's Notes by Steve Jackson

SJ Games isn't an easy market to break into, if you're a beginning game designer. We're always interested in new talent, but we have a limited amount of time and money, and most of that goes to in-house projects. But once in a while, somebody makes the cut. One way is to do what Chad Irby did with the *Car Wars* concept, or Allen Varney did with *Globbo* . . . hit us with an idea that looks like it is more fun than anything we're working on! Another way is to do what Wallace Wang did with *Orbit War*.

We've wanted to do this game for years. The concept was a natural – satellite combat in near-Earth orbit, set in the immediate future – units maneuvering up and down to change orbits as they fire at one another, trying to keep control of certain areas of Earth's surface. But we never got past the beginning stages; we always got stalled on the movement system. Orbital mechanics is a devilishly tricky thing to simulate on the gameboard. With a computer, of course, it's easy (now). But dividing a board into spaces, and simulating inertial movement in a constant, heavy gravity field? Very tough.

And *that* was where Wallace broke through. His "orbit line" system is not a mathematically precise simulation. But it is very clean, easy to explain, easy to play. And, most important, it gives the proper "feel" of orbital combat; the tactics that should work in Earth orbit *do* work in *Orbit War*. It's a classic example of "designing for effect" when true simulation is impossible. We loved it. We still do.

Of course, we made a few little changes (sorry about that, Wallace). For instance, it *is* more fun to allow satellites to orbit in either direction, and even to stop dead and go the other way. But it just doesn't work that way in real life. So, entertaining though it was, we scrapped it. It allowed tactics that no space commander will have available to him – not for many, many years, anyway. So out it went. But, overall, the movement system is as Wallace wrote it.

As playtests went on, we took considerably more liberties with the units. The "suicide satellite," originally a shrapnel-thrower like Wallace describes in his design notes, became a nuclear weapon. Much more effective – and why be subtle about explosions in space if you're nuking the Earth at the same time? Another big change we made involved the rockets. Originally, there was just one "rocket" unit. In looking at the cost differences between the rocket it takes to launch a satellite from Earth and the rocket it takes to drop something onto the planet from orbit, we decided to differentiate between ELRs and OLRs. The change added a little complexity, but seems to have been worth it.

The game turned out to be realistic enough that I think it's a valid teaching/predictive tool for anyone interested in space warfare. In fact, that leads me to disagree with one point Wallace made in his design notes. I think that satellite networks *could* help to preserve the peace, or even make a war less deadly. I've played games where I won without dropping a single nuke onto the enemy territory. I absorbed a few myself, but not many! And I destroyed his ability to hurt me – *without* destroying his homeland. But the game also makes one thing very clear: If one superpower controls space, *it controls the world*. I could have ended the games by nuking my opponent until he glowed; he couldn't have stopped me. Some games *did* end like that, which gave rise to some clever ideas for use of dummy counters and anti-missiles.

Indeed, the new ideas kept coming in – from Wallace as well as from the playtesters – even as the magazine was being put to bed. So, rather than delay *SG* 66 further, we decided to keep the best of the "late" ideas for an expansion in this issue. You'll find it on the following pages.

* * *

We're happy with *Orbit War*. So happy, in fact, that we're considering two possibilities: releasing it, probably in late 1984, as a separate $5 game in "Pocket Box" format, and/or encouraging Origin Software to translate it to computer format. What do you think? Write and let us know.

SG

Official
MERCENARIES SPIES & PRIVATE EYES

MINIATURES
For All ESPIONAGE TYPE Role Playing Games

M1 SECRET AGENTS I
M2 MOBSTERS
M3 POLICE
M4 SECRET AGENTS II
M5 MERCENARIES I
M6 TERRORISTS
M7 PRIVATE EYES

$3.00 per set; 3 figures in each set.

Order from:

CASTLE CREATIONS
1322 Cranwood Square South
Columbus, Ohio 43229

licensed figures for BLADE
a division of Flying Buffalo Inc.

ORBIT WAR

Advanced Rules

by Steve Jackson

Playtesters: Christopher Frink, Jim Gould, Stephen Hearn, Mike Steenbergen, Paul Whitley

Here, as promised in *SG* 66, are advanced rules for ***Orbit War***. They are optional – use them when you're ready for more complexity. The basic *OW* rules are numbered from 1 to 24 and are followed by an unnumbered "Space Station" advanced rule, (which we will consider Section 25). Hence, the advanced rules start with Section 26.

Counters for the advanced rules are also included. There are ten COM satellites, ten "Damaged" markers, and two "Damaged Space Station" counters for each side. We've also thrown in some of the more-used counters: mines and dummies.

If you've played *OW*, you may have noticed that we botched the Game-Turn Track – we really didn't mean for player "B" to go first in Turn 8 *and* Turn 9. So we fixed it. At the end of this article is a new bit of turn track; cut it out and tape it over the *snafu*ed section. (Make sure you get the numbers in the right place.)

Now, before we get to the new rules, we have some clarifications on the old ones:

7.3 *Normal Combat.* In order to attack, a unit must have an attack factor of *at least* one.

24.2 *INTERCEPT.* The special Shuttle in this scenario may not enter before Turn 4; it is a deep space reinforcement and must act like one.

New Rules

The first advanced rule isn't new; it's a retread from the original game. The *TRIPWIRE* scenario presented a special rule (see 24.32) that stated, "The first player to successfully hit the enemy with a nuclear warhead *loses* 10 points (though he still gets points for the hit). If each player hits on the same turn, each loses the 10 points." That rule now applies to all scenarios played with nuclear warheads.

26.0 COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITES (COM)

A communications satellite is an unarmed satellite designed to pick up, amplify, and relay signals. COMs may be civilian or military, but any COM will be most valuable for command and control of military units – ground, sea, air, and space – in times of crisis.

26.1 *Cost.* COMs cost the same as EWRs – 2 in orbit, 1½ in deep space, and 1 on Earth. Each side has ten available.

26.2 *Victory Points.* At the end of each turn, each player gains 1 VP for each COM satellite in his *own* spotting cone. A destroyed enemy COM is worth 2 VPs.

26.3 *Jamming.* If a COM ends its turn in an enemy CJS's radius of effectiveness, the COM player gets no VP – the COM has been jammed.

26.4 *Space Stations.* Owners may give Stations a two-COM capability *instead of* their two-EWR capability (see Section 25, *Observation*). This choice is written down or stated before the Station is placed in orbit.

27.0 TARGETING NUCLEAR ATTACKS

In the basic game, Nukes dropped on the enemy homeland are assumed to carry out generalized destruction, scoring victory points for the player who dropped them. However, they have no effect on the enemy's space capability. In reality, enemy launching facilities might be a high-priority target, especially if strategists favored a "surgical" approach in hopes of limiting the war.

27.1 *Targeting.* When a rocket or satellite that could be carrying a nuclear warhead is launched at (or dropped on) the enemy's country, the owning player must state whether the rocket (or satellite) is aimed at *industrial targets* or *launching facilities*. In the case of a MIRV attack, the Nukes composing the MIRV may be divided between the two target types in any way. (The MIRV owner must write this down.) Also, the MIRV owner may say the MIRV-carrying rocket is aimed at *either* target type. After interceptions (if any), the attacking player reveals which rockets contained MIRVs and shows the opponent the note saying where the warheads actually struck. Note that it is perfectly all right, with a MIRV, to say that the rocket is aimed at one target type, and then show a note proving that the warheads MIRVed so that some (or all!) hit the other target type instead. *It is important to announce targets for all incoming rockets.* If a player doesn't bother to announce targets, the opponent may conclude, correctly, that the rockets contain dummy payloads.

27.2 *Effects of "Industrial" Hits.* A Nuke striking "industrial" targets has the effect given in the ***Orbit War*** rules: 10 VPs per warhead. It has no effect on the enemy's space capability.

27.3 *Effects of "Launching Facility" Hits.* A Nuke striking enemy launching facilities does *not* automatically score victory points. However, it *does* have a good chance of disrupting enemy space traffic and/or eliminating units not yet launched. The attacking player rolls one die for *each* warhead that hits enemy facilities. Results are as follows:

1 No effect.
2 Enemy can launch no ELRs next turn.
3 Enemy's ELR launch capability is reduced by 1 for the rest of the game. Note that three such results will reduce a player's ELR launch capability to *zero* rockets per turn!
4 Enemy loses 2 build points' worth of reinforcement waiting on Earth.
5 Enemy loses 4 build points' worth of reinforcements waiting on Earth.
6 Enemy loses 6 build points' worth of reinforcements waiting on Earth.

If reinforcements are lost, the owning player chooses what is to be lost; Shuttles that have already flown, Earth-based missiles, and SFs recuperating on Earth, may also be lost. The damage is "rounded up" if necessary; for instance, if a player had to lose 2 build points' worth of reinforcements, and the only units he had left were an ELR (½ point) and a 7-MIRV (8 points), he would have to lose the MIRV! However, if a player has *no* reinforcements left on Earth, this result does not affect him. When reinforcements are lost, the attacking player gets victory points for their destruction, as usual.

28.0 DAMAGE TO SATELLITES

Usually, any hit on a satellite in orbit will destroy it. However, it is possible for a trivial hit to put a satellite out of commission without destroying it.

28.1 *"Damage" Result in Combat.* When a satellite is attacked and the attacker rolls *exactly* the number needed to hit it (but no better), then the satellite is "damaged." It can no longer attack or perform any other function (i.e., CJSs don't jam missiles or satellites; EWRs and COMs don't score victory points). It still moves by Orbital Movement, but no longer can take Optional Movement or gravitational acceleration. It defends at its normal strength. Place a "Damaged" marker on the damaged unit.

28.2 *Special Cases:*

28.21 *Space Stations.* A "damaged" Space Station is replaced by a Damaged Space Station counter (four

are supplied). A damaged Space Station performs like a normal one except that, as shown on the counter, it has an attack strength of 2, defense of 3, and movement of 1. Its launch capability is limited to either three OLRs or 10 mines/missiles per turn, like an OWP. A damaged Station has an EWR capability of one instead of two. If a damaged Station is damaged again, it is destroyed.

28.22 *Special Forces.* An SF unit cannot be "damaged" – if it is hit, it is destroyed.

28.23 *Shuttles.* A damaged Shuttle may not land or attack, but it may *attempt* Optional Movement. Each turn, the owning player rolls 1 die. On a 4, 5, or 6, the crew has managed a jury-rig that lets the Shuttle move normally on that turn. On a 1, the damage was worsened and that Shuttle may no longer attempt Optional Movement.

28.24 *Rockets.* If a rocket is damaged, its contents are undamaged. See 29.41.

28.3 *Victory Points for Damage.* A player scores 1 VP for damaging an enemy satellite. If an already-damaged satellite is destroyed, he scores the rest of its VP value. Thus, destroying a damaged HK is worth no VP, but destroying a damaged Shuttle is worth 2 VP.

28.4 *Repeated Damage.* If a damaged unit is damaged again, it is destroyed.

29.0 SALVAGE

A damaged satellite may be "salvaged" by either side – to repair it, or to study its secrets.

29.1 *Salvage Procedure.* Salvage may only be attempted by a manned unit – i.e., a Shuttle, SF, or Space Station. To salvage a damaged satellite, a unit must enter its hex and move in orbit with it for one turn. The turn after that, the salvaging unit is considered to have "picked up" the damaged satellite, and may move with it normally.

29.2 *Units That May Be Salvaged.* Any unit except a Space Station may be salvaged. A damaged ELR or OLR is worthless, but its contents are undamaged and may be salvaged.

29.3 *Repair.* Any salvaging unit can attempt to repair a friendly satellite. Exceptions: Space Stations cannot be repaired, and Shuttles are a special case.

29.31 *Repair by Shuttles.* An *undamaged* Shuttle can attempt repair once per turn after the damaged unit is picked up. The salvaged satellite counts as part of the Shuttle's payload while it is in the Shuttle, but the Shuttle can move and fight normally while repairs are attempted. To repair a damaged satellite, the Shuttle player must roll a "1" on one die. A *damaged* Shuttle may pick up another satellite, but may not attempt to repair it.

29.32 *Repair by Special Forces.* An SF unit may take Optional Movement with a salvaged satellite, or attempt to repair it, but may not do both. To repair a damaged satellite, the SF player must roll a "1" on one die; this may be attempted once per turn. An SF unit may attack and defend normally on any turn that it attempts a repair.

29.33 *Repair by Space Stations.* If a Station picks up a damaged satellite, or if another unit brings it a damaged satellite, the Station may attempt to repair it. A Station may work on up to *two* damaged satellites each turn, in addition to carrying out all its other functions. To repair a damaged satellite, the Station player must roll 1-3 on one die.

29.4 *Special Cases:*

29.41 *Rockets.* The payload of a damaged rocket is considered undamaged. It may be "salvaged" by any manned unit. The rocket itself cannot be salvaged. If the satellite is a friendly one, the salvaging unit may release it where it is or move it elsewhere. However, the rocket's contents *cannot* be released into orbit, or otherwise used, without a salvage effort by a manned unit.

29.42 *Shuttles.* A Shuttle is too large to be moved except under its own power or by a Space Station. If another Shuttle, or an SF, makes contact with a damaged Shuttle to attempt repair, it cannot "tow" the damaged Shuttle. It may, however, move with the damaged Shuttle if that Shuttle manages to move (see Section 28.23), and *may* continue to attempt repairs.

29.5 *Return to Earth.* A damaged satellite (except a Shuttle or Space Station) may be loaded aboard a Shuttle and returned to Earth. In either case, it is automatically repaired and ready for launching on the *third* turn following the turn in which it was returned. (Most of the time is required for launch preparations having nothing to do with the actual repair.)

29.6 *Capturing Enemy Satellites.* A damaged enemy satellite (except a Space Station) may be captured for study. It may not be repaired or used, but the capturing player gains VPs for studying it.

29.61 *Transport of Captured Satellites.* The same rules are used for transport of enemy satellites as for transport of friendly ones.

29.62 *Victory Points.* The first time a satellite or payload of any type is returned to Earth or to a Space Station for study, the capturing player gets 6 VPs. Each subsequent unit of the same type that is returned for study is worth one more VP than the player would have gotten for destroying it. In all cases, the capturing player still gets the 1 VP that he earned for damaging that satellite. 3-MIRVs, 7-MIRVs, and Nukes are all considered different unit types.

29.63 *Shuttles.* Since Shuttles are manned, it is harder to capture a damaged one, especially since military astronauts are assumed to be willing to die rather than lose their craft. After rendezvousing with a damaged enemy Shuttle, the attacking player must roll one die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3, the damaged Shuttle is destroyed; on a 4, 5, or 6, the crew has been killed or incapacitated, and the Shuttle has been captured. The "prize crew" may attempt to jury-rig it as per Section 28.23, except it may move only on a 1 or 2, and suffers permanent damage on a 5 or 6.

29.7 *Hazards of Salvage.* In some cases, the units a player is attempting to salvage may explode. The rules below hold both for damaged satellites and for satellites salvaged from damaged rockets.

29.71 *Mines.* Whenever a mine is salvaged, the salvaging player must roll one die on first rendezvous. On a "6", the damaged mine explodes when the salvaging unit comes close, doing normal damage.

29.72 *Suicide Satellites.* Whenever a suicide satellite *or* a rocket carrying a nuclear warhead is salvaged, the salvaging player must roll two dice on first rendezvous. On a result of "11" or "12", the enemy ground controllers succeeded in triggering the Nuke. An "11" indicates a normal Nuke attack on the salvaging unit; a "12" indicates the salvaging unit had approached closely, and is automatically destroyed! In either case, all other units in that hex also suffer the effects of a Nuke explosion – see Section 18.1.

29.8 *Using Captured Units.* Enemy units may never be repaired or used by the salvaging player.

30.0 STRATEGIC CAMPAIGN SCENARIO

This scenario represents a full-scale war between the superpowers, interrupted by cease-fires which last only until one side is ready to attack again.

30.1 *Setup.* Each side gets 200 build points; no more than 100 may be used for any one class of units (orbital, Earth-based, or deep space).

30.2 *New Build Points.* Players get one new build point per 12-hour period. Each time the Turn Marker reaches Turn 12, each player gets one new build point, which may be used beginning on the next turn, or saved for later. Players may also "save" up to 10 build points of their initial allotment, to allow some flexibility after the war starts. These ten points, and all new build points, must be used to build Earth-based missiles or reinforcements.

30.21 *Repair of Launching Facilities.* A player who has lost launching facilities due to enemy attack (Section 27.3) may spend five build points to rebuild launching capacity by one ELR/turn, back up to the original three ELRs/turn. Capacity cannot be increased past three ELRs/turn.

30.22 *Repair of Salvaged Satellites.* If a salvaged satellite is brought down from orbit, it may be repaired and added to the stock of Earth reinforcements (Section 29.5). This costs *no* build points.

30.3 *Cease-Fires.* At any time, by mutual agreement, the players may declare a cease-fire. Play continues normally during a cease-fire, except that:

(a) a player loses 1 VP each time he attacks in any way. Rocket launches against enemy territory and mine explosions are considered attacks. CJS jamming, anti-missile fire from Earth, salvage attempts (except on enemy Shuttles), and detonations of mines or nukes *while the enemy is trying to salvage them* are *not* attacks.

(b) a player loses 1 VP each time he launches a Shuttle or ELR *without* enemy permission. Permission may be granted in exchange for some concession, or totally withheld; this is up to negotiation between the players.

(c) if a player succeeds in destroying a manned unit – Space Station, Shuttle, or SF – he not only loses 1 VP for the attack, but scores *no* VP for destroying the unit.

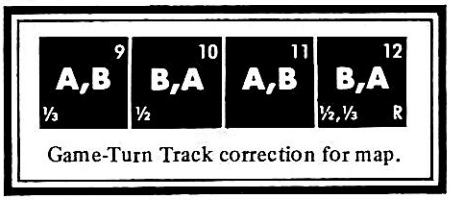
(d) a player loses 10 VPs if he detonates a Nuke, either in space or against enemy territory. Detonation of the first Nuke ends a cease-fire, and players may return to normal play. Note that players continue to receive new build points every 12 turns during a cease-fire.

30.31 *Ending Cease-Fires.* Players may agree that a cease-fire will terminate at a given time, or they may declare an indefinite cease-fire, and terminate it at any time by mutual agreement. Use of a Nuke also terminates a cease-fire, unless the Nuke exploded "accidentally" while the enemy was trying to salvage it.

30.32 *Refitting of Shuttles.* At a cost of one build point, a Space Shuttle that has returned to Earth from orbit may be refitted and launched again. It must sit on the ground for at least 24 turns (one day) before re-launching. (This is a far better turnaround than today's Shuttles can achieve, but might be possible to an advanced Shuttle in wartime.)

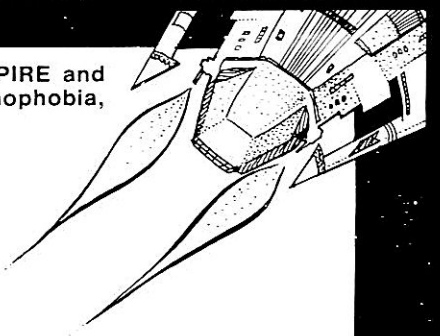
30.4 *Optional Rules.* It is suggested that all the optional/advanced rules presented above be used with this scenario.

30.5 *Ending the Game.* The game ends when (a) one player is 200 victory points ahead of the other at the end of a turn, or (b) when a cease-fire lasts longer than 18 turns. At the end of the cease-fire, the winner is the player with the most victory points.



Game-Turn Track correction for map.

First we brought you over 30,000 turns of BEYOND THE STELLAR EMPIRE and WARBOID WORLD. Now we introduce our new Play By Mail game of Xenophobia, Conquest, and Space Warfare called . . .



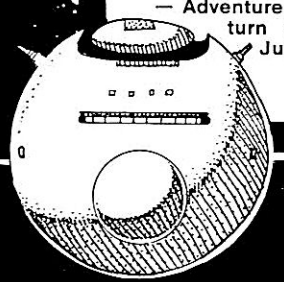
CAPITOL

CAPITOL *Features* —

- A strategic space warfare game, completely computer moderated.
- Approximately 100 players per game.
- Players design their race's characteristics and description.
- Design your own starships and build them at your star bases.
- Expand your empire and conquer other races.
- An "advanced stage" of the game introduces new technologies of stargates and improved ship movement capabilities.
- CAPITOL's simplified order formats are easy to remember. No coding your orders onto computer cards or other gimmicks.
- CAPITOL has an easy to understand rule book, complete with numerous examples.
- CAPITOL was subjected to the largest playtest of ANY commercial PBM game. Over 100 players played 1500 turns of CAPITOL prior to its release.
- Adventures By Mail has been providing continuous 48 hour turn around time for all our games since July, 1981. Just ask our players!
- Each turn of Capitol costs $2.50 for the first 60 orders. Each additional 30 orders costs $1.00.

"CAPITOL is fast becoming the standard against which other space warfare games are compared"

- With each rule book you receive a set of overlays to use in mapping the game and moving your ships.
- Mapping CAPITOL is extremely interesting, using the computer printed maps you receive with your turn results.
- No due dates. CAPITOL allows you three turns per month. Most other computer moderated games have the usual one turn every three weeks (approximately).
- Capitol is a balanced game. Each player may buy a maximum of two setups per game.



SEND $2.50 FOR COMPLETE RULES PACKAGE TO:
Adventures By Mail, PO Box 436, Cohoes, NY 12047

THE TRIBES OF CRANE

Join the classic! A new world has just been opened. Now is your chance to create history. Join Crane III today!

You, Task Chief of the Leopard people wandering tribe of Crane, sit in your great wagon awaiting news from your swift searching outriders. Suddenly hoof beats approach. The outriders leap from their mounts to your wagon flushed with excitement for they know full well the meaning of their news. But one sector to the North the great merchant caravan of the Impala people has been spotted. The order is given "To arms . . . to arms!" You snap your orders, "Gather my captains of hundreds. Let all know the tactic will be enfilade right. Now my arms, my mount." You heard that Kate, Chief of the Impala people, has chosen a stand and defend tactic twice before; will he again? You know also that the Impala people are fine warriors as are all the people of the many tribes. This will be no raid of the strong on the weak, but rather a mighty clash of **The Tribes of Crane . . .**

The Tribes of Crane is a unique correspondence game, allowing for interaction between players and the fantasy world of Crane and each other through a continuous game that may be entered at any time.

As a new player you will start as the chief of one of the many wandering tribes of Crane. Perhaps your tribe will be of the Sea people or Caravan merchants.

As chief you will know many secrets of your people and their lands, but there will be much you have still to learn of the lost secrets of Crane. It will be you who decide if your people will remain in their familiar homeland or begin a journey to new lands as you strive to increase your herds, train warriors, and learn of the ancient lost secrets that can move your people toward prosperity and dominance.

The land of Crane is a complete fantasy world with a full range of geography from the permanent ice of the polar regions, to the deserts, and tropical forests of the equator.

Cities dot the continents of Crane providing centers of trade and homes for the powerful Shamen and Kinglords.

The creatures of Crane are as varied as its geography. Cattle, goats and the caribou are the mainstay of the tribes, depending on the geography. But horses and the great mancarrying war hawks are important to the fierce warriors. Many undomesticated creatures also inhabit Crane such as the Euparkeria, a huge bipedal lizard that feeds on cattle in the grasslands of Crane.

Interaction between players is very common. Alliance, trade and combat are always possible. Combat is determined in part by a comparison of tactics used by the antagonists, the relative number of warriors, and the geography.

The games objective is to increase the relative strength and prosperity of your tribe which is measured by different criteria, depending upon the type of tribe and thus obtain points. Players try to obtain high average points per turn thus placing new players on a par with those who have been playing longer.

In Europe contact: Mitre Wargames Lothlorien, 77 Burntwood Grange Rd., Wandsworth Common, London England SW18.

The Tribes of Crane may be entered for **$13.00** which includes the first two turns, set up turn, a rule book and all necessary material (except return postage). Thereafter, turns are $4.00 each. A rule book may be purchased for $3.50.

☐ Check here for a free catalog of all Schubel & Son's games.

Send to **Schubel & Son**
P.O. Box 214848
Sacramento, CA 95821

Enter me in **The Tribes of Crane.**

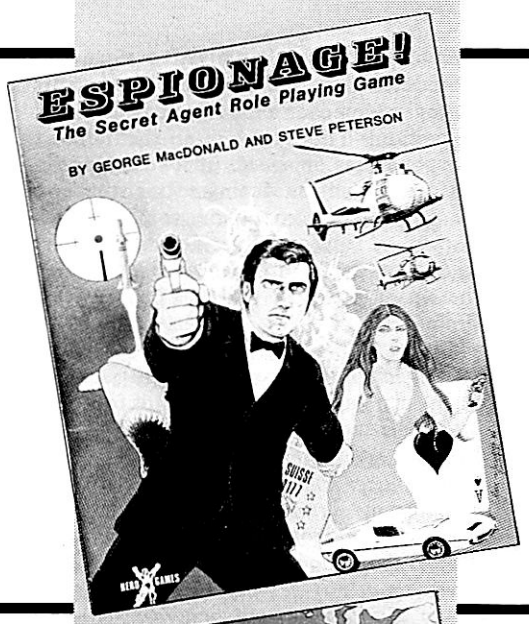
Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Copyright 1979 by Schubel & Son

Quality Service
Since 1974!



Spy vs. Spy vs. Spy

a comparative review by W.G. Armintrout

Illustrations from the Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes rulebook

Three new spy role-playing games came out in 1983. The two reviewed here are from established publishers and are based on popular game systems. (The third, *James Bond 007*, is reviewed on page 18.)

Espionage!, from Hero Games, uses the *Champions* superhero game system. It comes boxed (with terrible cover art), and includes a 64-page rules booklet and a 16-page adventure. The printing is computer-style – a bit hard to read, but you get used to it. Also in the box are three of those rounded-corner, six-sided dice.

Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes, from Blade (a division of Flying Buffalo), uses the *Tunnels & Trolls* system. It comes as a 112-page magazine-size paperback, with beautiful art (both interior and exterior) and easy-to-read print.

Each game has its own special angle – *Espionage!* is strictly for CIA operatives, while *MSPE* includes not only spies, but detective mysteries and soldier-of-fortune expeditions as well. In a sense, however, both games have a common foe: not Smersh or Spectre, but TSR's *Top Secret*. For four years, *Top Secret* has ruled the spy game roost without competition. *Espionage!* and *MSPE*, in addition to attracting new players to spy games, may also siphon players away from *Top Secret*.

For those who have yet to try a spy game, the question is: How do *Espionage!*, *Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes*, and *Top Secret* compare? Which is closest to the kind of adventure *you* want to play? If you play *Top Secret* now, the question is: How do the new games stack up against it? Are they better? The answers are a bit surprising. Comparing them head-to-head:

Characters

Top Secret characters have twelve attributes, six of which are rolled up on percentile dice. Only two are important: Offense, which acts both as speed and accuracy in gunfights; and Life Level (hit points). Characters also have language fluency ratings, and knowledge scores for various fields. Player characters must belong to the Investigation, Confiscation, or Assassination bureaus of their spy agencies.

Espionage! agents are built using Character Points. Each character has 50. Players first decide which branch of the CIA to join – Technical Services, Espionage, Counter-espionage, or Covert Action – or, they may specialize in a particular region of the world. They then "buy" skills and attributes. (Each CIA branch has skill or attribute requirements.) There are 61 skills, divided among Intelligence-based (Paramedic, Computer-Programming, and Tracking, for example); Dexterity-based (like Contortionist, Stealth, and Acrobatics); Presence-based (Seduction, Persuasion, and the like); Combat (by weapon type or class); General (Gambling, Demolitions, and Forensic Medicine); and Other (Luck, Linguist, and a host of others). If you need more points for your character, you can get them by accepting a liability – anything from a hook nose to a KGB assassination squad on your tail. (How about a *blind* secret agent?) The character development rules in *Espionage!* are excellent, but they could be presented better. Skill costs are hard to find, and CIA branch requirements are badly explained. (A Covert agent can raise his attributes and it costs him -5 points?)

MSPE characters are rolled up the old-fashioned way – three six-sided dice. Two of these die rolls are vital: Dexterity, which determines your character's ability with a gun, and Constitution (hit points). Intelligence is also important, since it determines how many points you can spend to buy skills (and which skills you're smart enough to acquire). There are 72 skills in three categories – Combat (Pugilism, Brawling, and the like); Knowledge (Coroner, Medical Examiner); and Special (Sky Diving, Seduction, and Inherited Titles – even knighthood). Dice are rolled to determine the amount of money each character has; money is then used to pick

up equipment. While luck plays a large part in character creation, the process is quite a bit of fun. I'm not sure if it's the skill selection, or if I'm captivated by pictures of parachutes and helicopters.

Success Rolls

Top Secret's Achilles heel has always been the way in which characters "do things." Obviously, the designer intended for us to use all the character attributes, but he forgot to tell us how. The system of rules for doing things is glimpsed only in obscure notes for unjamming guns and deactivating security systems. Top Secret has a completely different sytem for interacting with non-player characters, but, like the action rules, it's also a lame horse: Players all gang up to charm that important hotel maid on the Austrian border. Does 007 work that way?

The most common way to have a character do something in ***Espionage!*** is to use a skill. As with nearly every aspect of the game, players have to make a three-dice roll against the appropriate skill's Roll Number. Roll Numbers can be derived from a character attribute, or they can be arbitrarily assigned. They can be modified by a character's skill level, "complementary" skills, opposite skills (when you try to *shadow* an enemy agent who is trying to *conceal* himself, for example), or by a whole batch of situation modifiers. All in all, it's an excellent system. There are also two minor systems: Presence Attacks (overwhelming an enemy by sheer personality) and Perception Rolls (Did you see it? Did you hear it?). The game has only two bugs – how to handle things that fall between certain skills, and nailing down the details of every skill. (If paramedics fail their first Prevent Dying roll can they try again? How soon? The rules never specify.)

MSPE borrows ***Tunnels & Trolls***' elegantly simple saving roll system. The gamemaster determines the difficulty level and the appropriate attribute whenever a die roll comes up. This produces a "to hit" number, to be rolled on two dice. The system covers any situation that might come up. There is just one problem: the GM has to make the decisions. Is the leap over the bottomless chasm a fifth or seventh level saving roll? There are two special types of saving rolls: the Zero level (for enormously easy tasks), and the Megadeath Luck saving roll (to avoid certain death when the nuclear bomb detonates . . .)

Combat

Combat in Top Secret takes place in phases representing one second. Each phase has four steps: fighting over objects, melee, gunfire, and movement.

Espionage! uses 12-second turns, broken into twelve one-second segments. Characters have an attribute – Speed – that determines the number of segments during which each character can perform an action. The problem is that almost everyone has a speed of two, and can perform an action during segments 6 and 12. By way of comparison, someone with a speed of four could act during segments 3, 6, 9, and 12. In other words, doubling the Speed attribute allows a character to fire a weapon twice as often or run twice as far.

An ***MSPE*** turn represents 30 seconds. Each turn has two gunfire rounds followed by a melee round.

Top Secret characters act in Base Speed order (faster characters first). The list of characters is run through twice – the first time, characters fire half their allowed shots; the second time, if they're still alive, they can get off the rest of their shots. Guns are rated according to the number of shots they can fire in one turn. Pistols can get off one shot, while a Thompson submachine gun belts out five. Speed – which determines firing order – depends on a character's Offense score and the speed factor of the gun being fired. Speed may be modified if the character is wounded, surprises, draws a gun, or – most importantly – moves. It all works well. In fact, it's fun.

When the appropriate segment comes up, an ***Espionage!*** character can do almost anything. Firing a gun takes only half an action, but it must be the *last* half. A

character could use the first half to start a car, reload, draw a gun, or run 6 meters. Most *Espionage!* guns fire single shots; a few automatics fire 5- or 10-shot bursts. Characters act in the same segments, performing actions in dexterity order. The problem is that a lot of characters have the same dexterity so each turn they "roll off" to see who goes first. This has the effect of slowing the action down.

An *MSPE* character may fire three times per gunfire round. Most guns fire single shots, but some fire 3-shot or full-clip bursts. (Taking careful aim, I squeeze the trigger and my trusty Maxim machine gun volleys 250 bullets at the bad guys.) The rules don't actually say, but I have the awful feeling that gunfire is simultaneous in this game – you can't shoot him before he shoots you, unless you bought that Quick Draw skill.

In order to score a hit in Top Secret you have to roll less than your Base Accuracy (determined by your Offense score, gun accuracy, and range modifier). You're penalized for being wounded, for firing consecutive shots, for moving, and for firing at a moving or concealed target.

Espionage! characters score a hit by rolling an 11 or less on three dice. Of course, modifiers apply – combat values of shooter and target, accuracy of the gun, range penalties for that gun, and situation modifiers like brace and setting, surprise, target size, and so on. The autofire system is remarkable: It provides a bonus to hit, but the number of shots that strike home depends on *how much* you make your "to hit" roll by. The *Espionage!* single shot and autofire rules are excellent and easy to play.

In the *MSPE* combat system, a "to hit" number is determined by factoring in such considerations as range, movement of shooter and target, and target size. Players subtract their Dexterity from the "to hit" number to determine what they must roll on two six-sided dice in order to shoot someone, or something, successfully. It's a relatively simple system that handles more factors than you'd expect, though all the addition, subtraction, and multiplication involved is awkward. If the "to hit" roll is made, the number of bullets that land on target is determined randomly, not the world's most sophisticated rule, but it is simple. (Note that a Maxim, with 250 bullets, can hardly miss.)

A good deal of the fun in Top Secret results from "fumbles" – rolling a misfire or a jam. A misfire locks up a gun for two phases. A jam does the same, but then you have to start making Coordination rolls to fix it. (The odds get better as time goes by.)

Espionage! is even more fiendish. Fumbles occur on any roll of 16 or higher (on 3D6), or, more often, when using special ammo or a gun in poor condition. There are three types of fumbles in *Espionage!*: Guns firing bursts can lock into "runaway" fire, emptying their magazines; guns can jam, taking one phase to clear; worst of all are misfires, which have the potential to explode.

MSPE guns jam on a fumble roll, requiring an IQ saving roll to unjam. The saving roll starts out easy, but gets more difficult each turn you miss your roll.

In Top Secret, trying to reload during combat is a ticket to the morgue. It takes four phases to replace a clip, ten phases to load a revolver, and two phases to load a single bullet into an empty clip.

Espionage! guns – including revolvers, if you have a "speed loader" ready – can be reloaded *and* fired in the same phase. Guns can be reloaded at a rate of four bullets per phase.

In *MSPE*, guns can be reloaded in one turn. Pistols can be reloaded *and* fired in the same turn.

Lethality Table

WEAPON	*ESPIONAGE!* Damage[1]	No. to kill[2]	*MSPE* Damage	No. to kill	*TOP SECRET* Damage	No. to kill
Pistols:						
.22 pistol	9-36%[3]	5	18-65%	3	8-77%	3
Colt .45	18-72%	3	65-252%	1	23-92%	2
9mm Browning	9-72%	3	28-168%	2	15-85%	2
.357 Magnum	9-90%	2	46-233%	1	31-100%	2
Assault Rifles:						
AK-47	18-109%	2	74-355%	1	8-77%	3
M-16	9-109%	2	37-224%	1	8-77%	3
Submachineguns:						
Uzi	9-72%	3	46-187%	1	15-85%	2
.45 Thompson	9-72%	3	65-252%	1	23-92%	2
Miscellaneous:						
grenade	45-381%[4]	1	140-1403%	1	8-77%[5]	3
dynamite (1 stick)	not covered		9-56%	4	92%	2
bare fist[6]	18-109%	2	0-56%	4	0-131%	?
switchblade	9-36%	5	18-112%	2	8-77%[7]	3
axe	not covered		46-187%	1	8-77%	3

(1) Percentage of hit points lost for an average starting-level character.
(2) How many shots (or attacks) it usually takes to be sure of killing a starting-level character.
(3) *Espionage!* damage is figured using the polyhedral die results.
(4) Up to 763% if you jump on the grenade.
(5) Double damage in closed spaces.
(6) Subdual damage in all cases, not counting special skills or talents.
(7) When used as a hand-to-hand weapon, it can also add 77% damage to the normal fist damage.

Guns

The Lethality Table indicates some of the different weapons offered in *Top Secret, Espionage!*, and *Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes*. Guns in *MSPE* are horrendously murderous; one shot will probably kill the average character. *Espionage!* guns seem puny by comparison, but the game puts an emphasis on a stun point system. You are more likely to knock your enemies out than to blast them away.

Top Secret has a selection of 31 guns, ranging from pistols to submachine guns. They differ mainly in accuracy (both "general" and with modifiers at each range) and rate of fire. They are also rated for size, weight, speed, cost, and usefulness in melee (pistol-whipping 'em to death). All guns do the same damage, unless the optional rules are used; then gun damage is modified by calibre.

Espionage! has 55 weapons, covering the same categories as *Top Secret*. The guns vary on terms of damage done, range penalties, and the strength necessary to use them. They are also rated for size and autofire capacity. If you're really into detail, the country of manufacture is also listed.

MSPE includes a bewildering 133 guns – everything from machine guns to muzzleloaders. Unfortunately, the only difference between guns is damage done and whether the weapon in question is rated as a "short-range" or "long-range" weapon. Many guns end up with identical stats. As for the machine guns, they aren't very useful since *MSPE* doesn't have good autofire rules. Guns are listed with information about maker, era, and cost.

Specialty ammunition in Top Secret is included under an optional rule system, adding fun at the expense of making combat more deadly. Generally available are

dum-dum, armor-piercing, and gyrojet (mini-rocket) rounds. Guns can be customized for magnum rounds.

Not to be outdone, *Espionage!* has even more specialty ammo: armor-piercing, dum-dum, flechette (darts), tracer, and pancake (cloth knock-down bullets). There is one gun that fires only gyrojet ammo.

MSPE has no special ammunition.

Melee

Two areas of knowledge - physical education and military science – determine how much a Top Secret character knows about the six styles of hand-to-hand combat: untrained, knife fighting, boxing, swordplay, judo, and martial arts. Combat is handled in a simultaneous, blow-by-blow ("right foot to the groin") system using six reference tables. It's a nice system, but it's slow.

All *Espionage!* characters automatically know eight melee attacks, from punch and block to flying tackle and killing blow. In addition, attacks can disarm an opponent. Characters who pick up one of the Martial Arts skills may know up to six additional fighting styles, including kicks and throws. Combat uses the same three-dice system used for gunfire.

There are two melee systems in *MSPE*. Under the basic system, all characters have a melee damage rating (one die, unless they have the Pugilism skill). Fighting characters pair off and roll their damage. The low-rolling character takes the difference in the two rolls as his or her damage. There is a second system for those with Martial Arts skill. They have a chance to get their attacks off during the gunfire rounds (or even to make several attacks per turn), using three martial arts attacks – disarm, takedown, and direct attack. Disarm and takedown do just what you think. Direct attack is essentially normal hand-to-hand combat. A simple, but fun, system.

All three games share a weakness in handling hand-to-hand combat with knives and chains. *Top Secret* tries to factor them in as increased damage in bare hands combat. *Espionage!* has a section on melee weapons, but the rules are unclear on how to attack with them. *MSPE* has the best system – substituting weapon damage for bare hands damage, though it gets silly when you realize a 4th-level pugilist does more damage with bare hands than an axe-wielding psycho.

Damage

Though the rules don't explain this particularly well, Top Secret characters can take two kinds of damage – lethal and subdual. Lethal damage is done by guns and knives. Losing all your Life Level points this way results in death. A character who has been hurt in combat can regain Life Level points at a rate of one point per three days of rest, or per one day of hospital care. The average character can be totally healed in less than ten days. Subdual damage is done with bare hands, and possibly by anything that isn't a knife or gun – the rules are a bit vague. This sort of damage causes unconsciousness rather than death. Regaining points lost to subdual damage is never clearly explained (one point per three hours, I think).

Espionage! also has clarity problems when it comes to damage. Again, there are two forms of damage – killing and normal. Killing points are taken from your Body Points. Normal damage comes out of Stun Points (of which you have about twice as many as you have Body Points). If you lose all your Body Points, you begin to die, losing one more Body Point per turn until a paramedic can make a saving roll and stabilize your condition. If your total hit points reach the "opposite" of your original total – for example, when an 11 Body Point agent has -11 Body Points – you die. Body Points are regained by resting – about 50% recovery in one month. When you lose Stun Points, two things can happen: You can be *stunned*, and out of commission for one full combat phase, or you can be *knocked out* for somewhat longer. Stun Points are regained at the end of every turn *and* whenever a character chooses "Recovery" as his or her action. A lot of stunning and recovering goes on in any prolonged battle. The interesting point is that all weapons do *both* killing and normal damage. The major problem with this system is that the stun effects of guns are poorly explained. If they work the way I think they do, a gun can do a great deal of stun damage with a single bullet (about a 25% chance of knocking the target out cold, at least for a few turns). The system is, overall, brilliant, though hard to learn and a bit awkward in play.

Top Secret uses a hit location table to tell what part of the body a bullet strikes, but this is for effect only, having no practical impact on play. Optional rules are evidence of an attempt to remedy this situation, but the new rules make no sense. Head wound, foot wound - it's all the same.

There are optional locations rules in *Espionage!* which, if used properly, solve the gun-and-stun problem. Body and Stun damage now depends on the gun damage rating and the part of the body hit. Rules for impairing and disabling detail the results of specific damage levels to different parts of the body. This requires extra bookkeeping, but is well worth the trouble.

While *Top Secret* has 11 body areas, and *Espionage!* ten (more if you count each leg separately), *MSPE* has 20 areas, including direct shots to the heart, spine, and kneecap. This optional table is most-

WARCON '84

Texas' Oldest Wargame Convention

Feb. 10 - 12, 1984
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX

Dealers' Room — Napoleonics Tournament
Individual Fantasy Role-Playing
AD&D Tournament — Head-to-Head AD&D
Car Wars Tournament — Illuminati Tournament
Ogre/G.E.V. Tournament — And Much More!

For more information, contact:

Warcon '84
Texas A&M University
MSC Nova

P.O. Box J-1
College Station, TX 77844
(409) 845-1515

ly for color, though there are special rules for possible paralysis, amputation, and instant death. The *MSPE* system is the most "fun" of the three.

Experience

Agents in ***Top Secret*** *get specific experience point rewards for accomplishing certain objectives on their mission, with bonus awards possible, depending on the agent's bureau. Experience points can be cashed in for extra attribute points. As a character gets more points, he becomes a higher-level character, but the only reward for going up in levels is that experience points become harder to get. The system is pretty rigid -- not a lot of room for a GM to fiddle with the points. Characters advance swiftly at first and then improve at a crawl as they reach the higher levels.*

There are two experience systems in ***Espionage!***, and they work well together. First are the normal experience points, granted at the end of each adventure, depending on how the GM evaluates your performance. These points may be used directly to increase attributes, buy new skills, or improve old ones; there are no "levels" in ***Espionage!*** In addition to ordinary experience points, ***Espionage!*** also features a "Brownie Point" system, rewarding players for staying in character as CIA agents. Brownie Points determine how easy it is to get equipment and cooperation from the agency. Since they are the *only* source of equipment, Brownie Points help keep players in line. Experience points in ***Espionage!*** seem extra important because there are so few of them rewarded -- three points for a good mission, none for a bad one.

MSPE has some advantages over the other two games. It uses Adventure Points in two ways: as general character points which allow the character to go up in levels, and as skill experience points, added directly to individual skills as those skills are used. ***MSPE*** is the only one of the games to track experience points on a skill-by-skill basis.

Secret Devices

Everyone knows that the fun part of being a spy is using those secret devices -- ejection seats, pen-weapons, jetpacks, and so on. The Fun Stuff Chart lists some popular items, and indicates which games include them. My greatest surprise was that the new games did not cover some of the most popular items in any ***Top Secret*** *campaign: sleep gas, smoke bombs, thermite (for burning through metal), and truth serum. That gives* ***Top Secret*** *an edge in the fun department.*

Espionage! lacks many basic devices -- there aren't even silencers! Though there is a Demolition Skill, no other information on explosives (such as, do they do any damage?) is given. Cars are handled in loving detail, but rules for other vehicles consist merely of having skills for them.

MSPE is competitive in the special devices category, having nice rules for drugs (but no truth serum), flamethrowers, and bazookas. Some rules are very basic -- underwater combat and operating a vehicle -- but they do exist.

Fun Stuff Chart

Items	*Espionage!*	*MSPE*	*Top Secret*
animals	–	yes	yes
anti-tank weapons	–	yes	–
alarm systems	yes	yes	yes
binoculars	yes	–	–
bullet-proof vest	yes	yes	yes
car crashes	yes	yes	yes
climbing	yes	yes	falling only
drugs	–	yes	yes
flamethrower	–	yes	–
hang gliders	yes	yes	yes
helicopters	yes	yes	yes
outside income	–	yes	–
lockpicking	yes	yes	yes
molotov cocktail	–	yes	–
night combat	yes	yes	yes
parachutes	yes	yes	–
planes	yes	yes	yes
plastic explosives	–	yes	yes
poison	–	yes	–
psionics	–	yes	–
radios	yes	–	yes
scopes	yes	yes	yes
silencers	–	yes	yes
sleep gas	–	(tear gas)	yes
smoke bombs	–	–	yes
speedboats	yes	yes	yes
strip search	yes	–	yes
taser	–	yes	–
thermite	–	–	yes
truth serum	–	–	yes
underwater combat	–	yes	yes

Adventure Support

Adventure support is the help the game system gives to a gamemaster trying to start up a spy campaign, including both rulebook material and supplements. ***Top Secret*** *has what seems to be a formidable array of supporting products, notably a line of ready-to-go adventures and a gamemaster screen. Unfortunately, the adventures haven't been that good and the gamemaster screen is a disaster (the combat modifiers were left off!). Included with the original* ***Top Secret*** *set is* ***Operation: Sprechenhaltestelle****, one of the most lame-brained adventures on the market (though I suppose it gives the buyer some idea of what he or she is supposed to be doing). Also included with the game are some confusing notes on running an espionage campaign.*

Packed in the ***Espionage!*** box is ***Merchants of Terror***, an excellent adventure pitting a CIA team against nuclear terrorists. It avoids the usual "cute" encounters and hits the spot as a solid, realistic mission. If Hero Games can keep up this level of quality, it will outclass all of the other game systems.

MSPE has the advantage of being backed by the best adventure design team in the game industry -- Blade/Flying Buffalo -- with proven work by names like Michael Stackpole and Liz Danforth. So far, their support products for ***MSPE*** have been good. ***The Adventure of the Jade Jaguar***, first in a line of solo adventures, was fun, but a bit silly. (I played it a dozen times before I began to figure out who all the jungle tribes, revolutionaries, and army men were.) The ***MSPE Character Folder***, a really nifty character sheet, folds up to form a storage pouch for clues and notes. Character sheets don't normally send me, but I like these. The first full-fledged ***MSPE*** adventure, ***Stormhaven***, was released in December. The ***MSPE*** rulebook itself contains no example adventures, but it does provide one of the best guides to designing adventures I've ever seen, covering such topics as mercenary missions, spy missions, detective mysteries, even firearm-and-fantasy adventures.

A final note: Hero Games and Blade/Flying Buffalo have signed an agreement under which they will "cross-stat" all of their adventures, making them playable using either ***Espionage!*** or ***MSPE*** rules. ***Adventure of the Jade Jaguar, Stormhaven,*** and ***Border Crossing*** are all cross-statted.

Putting It Together

Top Secret *is a good game, though I think both of the newer games slightly eclipse it. It has the best combat system of the three -- being neither too simple nor too complicated -- and the widest variety of "fun" devices. Adventures are readily available for it. On the other hand,* ***Top Secret*** *is pretty lame when it comes to non-combat situations. If I were TSR,*

I'd be thinking about a new edition of the game to stay competitive.

Espionage! is the most complicated of the games, but once you master the rules I think it's the most satisfying of the three. It seems realistic. The parts that bog the game down are the turn phase rules (where all characters try to move at the same time) and the body/stun damage points rules (which work nicely but take time to allocate). The game also suffers from shoddy editing, with some rules left unclear and a lack of necessary examples. Nevertheless, I managed to figure it out and I'm going to keep playing it, if for no other reason than to try out the excellent CIA adventures I hope Hero Games will continue to produce.

Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes is one of the best-presented role-playing games I've ever seen, and if it isn't seriously in contention for a Charlie at Origins I'll be surprised. It should be understood that the game is supposed to be "fun." This means it often plays like: "Make a saving roll to avoid the giant anaconda" or "Make a saving roll to dodge the charging tiger"; on the other hand, getting involved in even a minor gunfight is a good way to get killed. *MSPE* is the simplest game of this bunch, yet I find it intriguing. It seems more open-ended than the other games: Utilizing *MSPE* rules, you could play out such varied adventures as *Murder on the Orient Express, The Dogs of War*, or the exploits of James Bond. The rules are excellent, promise to be well-supported, and can be a great deal of fun *if* you don't take your gunfights too seriously. (Don't cry when your favorite character takes 15 bullets to the kneecap.)

What we end up with is three very different spy games, all of them pretty good. Choosing between them is a matter of which most suits your fancy.

Top Secret (TSR); $11.00. Designed by Merle M. Rasmussen. One 8½" x 11" 64-page rulebook, 8½" x 11" 28-page Operation: Sprechenhaltestelle, Code Name: Pisces scenario book, and two 20-sided dice, boxed. Published 1980.

Espionage! (Hero Games); $12.95. Designed by Steve Peterson and George MacDonald. One 8½" x 11" 64-page rulebook, and 8½" x 11" 16-page Merchants of Terror scenario book, and three six-sided dice, boxed. Published 1983.

Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes (Blade/Flying Buffalo); $9.95. Designed by Michael A. Stackpole. One 8½" x 11" 112-page rulebook. Published 1983.

SG

RAL PARTHA IMPORTS

...When Things of the Imagination Come First.

Formerly Citadel Miniatures U.S.
5938 Carthage Court • Cincinnati, Ohio 45212
Toll Free 1 (800) 543-0272 • In Ohio (513) 631-7335
Complete Catalog Coming Soon

When You Need a Gift Idea Fast

No matter where you are, just pick up the phone and you're connected with the largest source of adventure games anywhere.

For prompt mail order service call:

TOLL FREE **800-225-4344**

Amex/MC/Visa accepted $10. minimum.

THE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST
Adventure Game Headquarters
Fantasy and Wargame Headquarters

NINE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST LOCATIONS:

IN NEW YORK:
THE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST, INC.
11 East 33rd Street
NEW YORK CITY, NY 10016
(212) 685-3880 685-3881

THE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST
320 West 57 Street
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10019
(212) 582-1272

IN MASSACHUSETTS:
STRATEGY & FANTASY WORLD
201 Massachusetts Avenue
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02115
(617) 267-2451

IN MARYLAND:
STRATEGY & FANTASY WORLD
8 West 25th Street
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21218
(301) 366-1665

IN NEW JERSEY:
THE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST
215 Glenridge Ave.
MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY 07042
(201) 744-6622

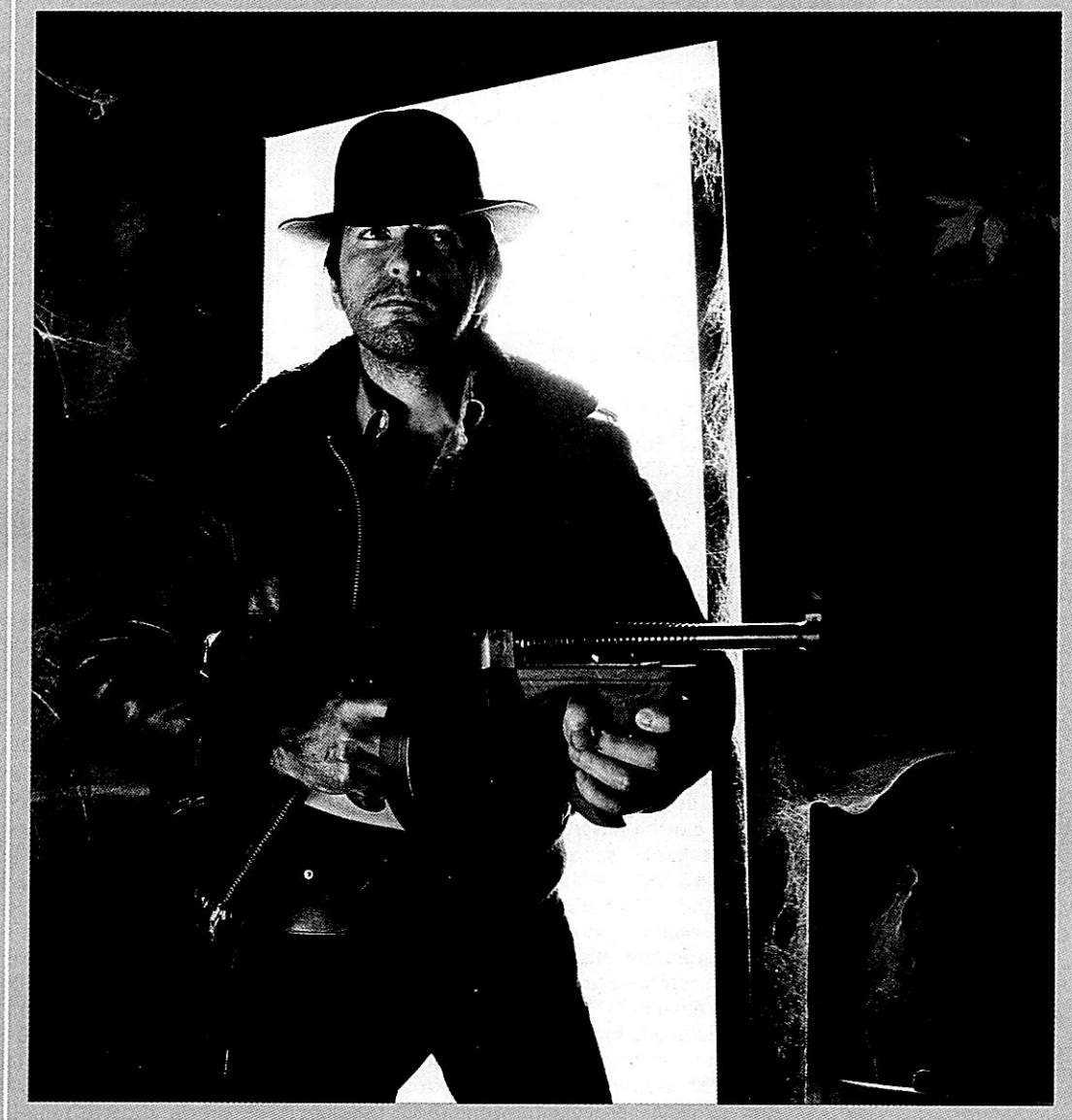
IN FLORIDA:
THE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST
5406 B Stirling Road
DAVIE, FLORIDA 33314
(305) 961-5660

IN PENNSYLVANIA:
THE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST
254 West DeKalb Pike
Valley Forge Shopping Ctr.
KING OF PRUSSIA, PA 19406
(215) 265-8562

STRATEGY & FANTASY WORLD
2011 Walnut Street
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19103
(215) 563-2960

IN VIRGINIA:
STRATEGY & FANTASY WORLD
103 E. Broad Street
FALLS CHURCH, VA 22046
(703) 532-2477

GRENADIER OPENS THE DOOR TO YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE.



Now you can get the widest variety of quality 25mm characters and monsters from the experts in role-playing miniatures—Grenadier Models.

If you appreciate craftsmanship and imagination, you'll want Grenadier characters in your adventures. Our newest line is for use with Call of Cthulhu™ (kuh•thool'hoo), Chaosium's award-winning game based on H.P. Lovecraft's gothic horror world. We also make 25mm figures for Fantasy Lords™, Secret Agents™, and The Dark Crystal™, and scale vehicles for Autoduel™ (for the game Car Wars™) and Ogre™. Coming this October, Grenadier will be making the official Traveller® miniatures, in both 15mm and 25mm sizes.

Call of Cthulhu™ 25mm characters, painted with Floquil's Polly-S.

Call of Cthulhu is a trademark of Chaosium Inc. Fantasy Lords and Secret Agents are trademarks of Grenadier Models Inc. The Dark Crystal is a trademark of Henson Associates Inc. Traveller is a reg. trademark of Game Designers' Workshop. Autoduel and Ogre are trademarks of Steve Jackson Games. Car Wars is a trademark of Texas Instruments Incorporated.

Look for these boxes at the local store where you buy your games and role-playing miniatures. If they don't have Grenadier's products, write to us at the address below.

Send us a postcard or letter and tell us where you saw our ad, and we'll send you the most recent issue of our newsletter—with gossip, contests, and information about our sculptors, our new projects, and some surprises about Grenadier and our hobby.

G Grenadier Models Inc. P.O. Box 305, Springfield, PA 19064

James Bond 007

Victory Games' Look At Her Majesty's Secret Service

reviewed by Aaron Allston

There's little question that *James Bond* constitutes one of the most successful series of films in cinema history. The question is whether Victory Games can take the elements of the Bond legend – the pseudo-espionage, exotic locales, beautiful women, gadgets, wild stunts, and so forth – and transform them into a game both true to its source material and successful on the shelves.

James Bond 007: Role-Playing In Her Majesty's Secret Service debuted early in October. Appearing then were the *Basic Set*, consisting of the basic rulebook, a sheaf of character sheets, and four dice; the *Q Manual*, a perfectbound book full of equipment from the Bond films and real life; and the *Gamesmaster Pack*, which includes a thicker pad of character sheets, a GM screen, a combat grid for miniatures, and a sheet of two-sided cardboard figures and bases. Just before this review went to press, the two preliminary adventures – *Goldfinger* and *Octopussy* – hit the stands; they will not be covered here.

The Basic Set

The advertisements bill *James Bond 007* as an "all new role playing system." They're not far afield – while no role-playing game *can* have entirely original game mechanics (the fact that all RPGs must deal with certain basic funtions dictates certain similarities), this one *does* have some innovative points.

Characters in *James Bond 007* start at one of three ranks: the "rookie," or beginning agent (well-trained but inexperienced); the "agent," (a mid-level operative, like the capable Holly Goodhead from "Moonraker"); and the "00"-level character (the 007 or XXX operative). Character generation is by point-allocation; rookies get 3000, agents 6000, and 00s 9000. It would have been rather easy to set all point values in multiples of ten and then divide by ten, starting characters out with 300, 600, and 900 points respectively; the current arrangement puts me in mind of pinball-machine scores inflated solely for appearance. Characters can increase their initial allotments – slightly – by taking on character disadvantages, *a la Champions*. The most common "disadvantage" taken is Attraction to Members of the Opposite Sex. This is, after all, Bond.

Players use their generation points to buy characteristics (Strength, Dexterity, Willpower, Perception, and Intelligence), skills, and physical aspects. Characteristics begin at 5 (this being the minimum attribute level an agent of MI6 should have) and can be raised as high as 15, which is a remarkable score. In the game, James Bond's highest characteristic is 14, in Perception. Jaws has a Strength of 18, but the designers admit it's a cheat necessary to simulate his abilities in the movies. Characters begin with two skills – Driving and Charisma, both at Skill Level 1 – and three Abilities, which are inflexible skills set at a specific ability level; these include Connoisseur, First Aid, and Photography.

Physical aspects determination, the last part of the point-allocation triad, is handled logically, but gamers will probably find it peculiar. The basis for point-allocation toward your physical aspects is simply this: The less remarkable-looking you are, the less likely you are to be recognized – but an innocuous appearance costs more generation points than an unusual appearance. The more unusual you look, the more Fame Points you are assigned, Fame Points determining how easy it is for you to be recognized. For instance, you can be 6'6" tall, 260 lbs. of rippling muscle, and Sensational looking, for a mere 90 Generation Points, but you will have accumulated 150 Fame Points. (Bond has 148.) At 5'11", 180 lbs., and normal-looking, you'll have *no* Fame Points, but such a character will cost you 600 Generation Points. Female operatives are less publicity-prone; a sensational-looking 6'2" 190-lb. female agent (if that combination makes any sense to *you*), the distaff equivalent of the offensive lineman mentioned above, would have only 110 Fame Points – females subtract 40 from their point total.

Skills cost 100 Generation Points to purchase initially; each additional Skill Level costs 20. The skill generation system is thus easy to remember but unremarkable. On the other hand, the skill *resolution* system is quite remarkable, and is one of the best things about this game.

Each skill has a Skill Level – say, you've bought Hand-to-Hand Combat for 100 points and brought it up to Skill Level 6 with the expenditure of an additional 100 (five skill levels extra at 20 points per). Each skill also has a Primary Chance, usually determined by adding the character's Skill Level to a relevant characteristic or average of characteristics. For instance, the formula for determining a character's Primary Chance in Hand-to-Hand is his Strength plus his Skill Level; if, in the example above, our character had a STR of 10, his Primary Chance in Hand-to-Hand Combat would be 16, which is decent, especially for a beginning character.

In order to resolve a skill use, you simply multiply the character's Primary Chance in the skill by the Ease Factor of the task at hand. If you have a Primary Chance at 13 for Electronics, and the GM has set the Ease Factor at 3 for short-circuiting a building's electrical system, your chance of success is a 39. This is extremely simple both to remember and use.

Skill Levels can be as low as 1 and as high as 15; a Skill Level of 15 plus an appropriate characteristic of 15 could yield a Primary Chance as high as 30. The Ease Factor of a task can range anywhere from ½ (excessively hard) to 10 (you could do it in your sleep), with 5 as the average. With an Ease Factor 10 score (rare) and a Primary Chance of 30 (rarer), you'd have to roll a 300 (10 x 30 = 300) or less on percentile dice to fail. That's not entirely true. Any roll of 00 is a failure. Why, then, don't they leave off rolls above 100?

That brings us to the second nicely done aspect of the skill resolution system. The number by which you make your roll determines the quality of the job you've done. For example, if you have a 100% chance to succeed (forgetting momentarily the 00 screwup roll), a roll of 51-99 is acceptable success; 21-50 is a good job; 11-20 is a very good job; and 01-10 is excellent. The better you do, the better the results, and the less time is taken in the effort. So, a success chance of 300 is indeed better than a success chance of 100, because an Excellent rating – a Quality Rating 1 result – can be achieved on a roll of 01-30 instead of 01-10, and so forth.

Connoisseur, First Aid, and Photography (which are basically skills) are instead labelled Abilities, assigned an immutable Primary Chance of 20 (which is quite good), and given to all player-characters. Presumably, this reflects MI6 training. Actually, though, *James Bond 007* designer Gerry Klug explains "That came out of a lot of playtesting . . . Nobody would take them because they aren't cost-effective." Since no one wanted to spend points for the low-intensity skills, and since those skills (especially Connoisseur) are vital to the James Bond milieu, the design team gave them to every character at an arbitrary, but highly acceptable, level. One problem with the skills: there aren't enough of them. Where, for instance, is Acrobatics? (Where would Bambi and Thumper from "Diamonds Are Forever" be without Acrobatics?)

Another type of skill included in the game is the Field of Experience. This comes from the optional Professions rule, where a character can choose his profession prior to entering the MI6, choose a Field of Experience from the appropriate list for each year in the profession, and also take a number of those nuisancy Fame Points for each year. The rule is listed as optional, but the character stats of important characters included show Fields of Experience.

These Fields are a little odd because they aren't really Skills – there's no Primary Chance, no relevant characteristic. You just do whatever you're supposed to be able to do, automatically. You don't roll against a Snow Skiing score to elude pursuers on the slopes, you just ski and roll against your Evasion skill. (Driving and Evasion are extraordinarily useful skills, incidentally. These are your "getaway" abilities.)

This brings us to the next innovation in RPG rules – the Chase sequence. Chases are highly abstract. You usually aren't at a specified distance; you're at Close, Medium, Long, or Distant range. If they're chasing you, Distant is best. If you're chasing them, Close is best. Common sense.

The chase sequence is rather complicated from turn to turn, but the gem within it is its bidding system. The sides (usually two) involved in the chase will bid on the difficulty level of the next maneuver. The player-character bids first. The one who wins the bid decides who goes first, rather reminiscent of *Melee*.

For instance, in a snow-skiing chase, our hero may decide he wants to throw off some of his pursuers with a Quick Turn maneuver. He doesn't announce his maneuver choice, he just bids that he will attempt the next maneuver at an Ease Factor of 5 (7 is the highest possible bid – and the lowest difficulty). The GM may let him have it at that, or decide that his pursuers really want him, and respond with a bid of Ease Factor 4. Our hero is now faced with the prospect of taking the Ease Factor 4 maneuver but letting his opponents decide who goes first, or bidding the still-nastier Ease Factor 3, and hoping he can make it . . . and that he won't be underbid again.

One problem with this, though, is that the characters, once committed to the bid and the maneuver, have to perform the maneuver. That's all right in theory, but consider: A gang of goons in one car, chasing James Bond's Aston Martin DB-V, and seeing him perform an impossible maneuver onto a side-road, may in the interests of their own skins just overshoot the road and double back, hoping to catch up later. In the game, they just make their roll and hope. The net effect, though, is that chases are nice to play, easy to gamemaster, and true to the genre. And that's what they're all about.

Combat is relatively simple. Take your Primary Chance in whatever combat skill is appropriate and multiply by the Ease Factor of the shot to get your success chance. A weapon has a specific damage range listed – not in terms of points (such as 1d8, or whatever) but in types of wound. For instance, a Damage Class E weapon – such as the beloved Walther PPK – will do a Light or Heavy Wound (depending on the Quality Rating of your shot) at normal range. At Close range, it will do a Light, Medium, Heavy, or Incapacitating wound, again depending on the shot's Quality Rating. Enough accumulations of wounds kill. Once again, it's an easy system to use.

All in all, it sounds pretty good so far. However . . .

Problems

The game is not without its flaws. It has quite a few difficulties, in fact. For instance:

(1) *Hero Points.*

"The *James Bond 007* Game in (*sic*) not like most role playing games available today. Those games are designed to make the GM all-powerful and give the NPCs a much greater advantage over the Player Characters." This bald statement, which appears on page 6, has annoyed everyone I've shown it to – me included. However, upon reflection, I've decided it's basically true; compared to *James Bond 007*, all other RPGs favor the GM and non-player-characters. One of the reasons is Hero Points. Characters gather Hero Points when they perform exceptionally well, and may use them to affect the Quality Ratings of actions they and their *opponents* perform. Hero Points can also increase or decrease appropriate Wound Ratings in a combat. For instance, Bond was stabbed through the heart in *Octopussy*. In game terms, the expenditure of four Hero Points could bring the Quality Rating of the Stab from 1 (heavy wound, or worse) to failure. To be fair, certain exceptional bad guys get Survival Points, which are identical in function to Hero Points except that they cannot be used aggressively, only defensively. Another problem with Hero Points is that they don't allow the GM to "cheat" a little to move the adventure in the right direction – the characters can often stop this effort.

(2) *Thunderball.*

The legal hassles which have come about because of the dispute over "Thunderball" and "Never Say Never Again" have resulted in the deletion of Ernst Stavro Blofeld, SPECTRE, and all other "Thunderball" characters from the Bond RPG universe. Holmes got along fine for years without Moriarty, but Bond without Blofeld is something else again. Instead, we have Karl Ferenc Skorpios, the big cheese of TAROT. Dr. No is now a member of TAROT; so is Rosa Klebb, if she survives the gaming version of "From Russia with Love." TAROT seems to be an amalgam of second-string villains from the movies and a cast of new and nasty NPCs, taking the place of the lost-in-litigation SPECTRE. Too bad.

(3) *Too True to Form.*

In keeping with the Bond tradition, Victory Games has inadvertently caused a couple of problems. For instance: Either one plays with a British accent, which tends to annoy the hell out of all players assembled, or one doesn't – and we have MI6 with an American accent. Give me Nick Fury any day. Also: The Bond movies, naturally, concentrate on one character, sometimes two, involved in an adventure. The game works that way, too; more than two or three players gets unwieldy and inappropriate to the genre. A more social GM may not care for it.

(4) *Art.*

Victory Games wasn't able to secure the rights to stills from the movies. With three stars in the movie series, ego problems between stars and management, convoluted contracts, and so forth, that's no surprise. However, considering the amount of money poured into production values for the game, I'm surprised that the Victory Games folks couldn't put more into the artwork. The game-box cover – an uncredited ripoff of the Bob Peak cover for "The Spy Who Loved Me," redrafted by James Talbot – is marginally acceptable; the equipment illustrations are fine. The rest of the art throughout is, in a word, bad.

(5) *References.*

The character NPCs presented are generally not credited to the movie in which they appeared. Also, where background detail on a character was unavailable, it was made up. Perhaps this won't annoy some gamers; I was irritated.

(6) *Charts.*

The game is awfully chart-heavy. The basic rulebook has in excess of 50 charts;

with the recent game-mechanics trend away from this sort of thing, I was surprised to find so much tabular material in *James Bond 007*.

Back to the Good Points

The game has still more good stuff, however. In addition to the normal and inevitable chapters dealing with the basic game mechanics, we have sections on interacting with NPCs, gambling and casino life, equipment (expanded in the *Q Manual*), game-mastering, multitudes of NPCs (again, sadly, with the "Thunderball" omissions), an extremely useful quick-NPC and quick-adventure detail generation system, writeups on MI6 and TAROT, an unexpected chapter detailing major cities from the movies and a short mini-adventure culled from "Dr. No."

I appreciated all the extras. I also appreciated the "annotated" feel to the first sections of the rulebook; generally, rules in a standard typeface occupy the left-hand column while GM's Notes in a diminutive sans-serif face appear in the right column. It's nicely arranged.

Q Manual

This volume is the equipment-booklet for *James Bond 007*. Each entry contains a description of the item, an italicized and often annoying (but just as often helpful) evaluation, supposedly from Q or one of his minions, a paragraph on game information, and a box showing game statistics. Usually there's a side-view diagram of the object in question.

Helpfully, about 75% of the material in the *Manual* – the description, diagram, and often Q evaluation and game stats – will be useful to players of other RPGs. Once you understand the game statistics of the equipment and can translate into statistics for other games, this item becomes usable for *Espionage, Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes*, and *Top Secret*, among others. Unfortunately, there are no "real-world" stats to aid this process. Attention to detail and research are good, though not perfect. Annoyingly, there is no bibliography. Bond gamemasters will generally need this product. Players will not.

Gamesmaster Pack

As noted before, this has four items: a reference shield, a pad of character sheets, an 11" x 17" combat display, and a set of cardboard figures plus bases.

The first part is the best. The reference shield reproduces 31 of the game's most important charts and sequence listings. It's in four panels, all in garish full-color. Knowing that the GM's Wound Level Chart is in precisely *that* obnoxious shade of orange, while his Multiplication Table is the one in the lurid pink-and-purple alternating stripes makes things easy to find, if your sensibilities aren't offended.

I consider the pad of 40+ character sheets to be a waste. In the basic package we have several nicely-printed sheets to use as photocopy masters, plus another printed in the rulebook in case those are all used or lost – inclusion of more was unnecessary.

The cardboard figures are printed on heavy cardboard, stamped out in different shapes. Bond, Anya Amasova, Odd Job, and many other named characters are represented, as are generic agents, several vehicles, and bystanders. Ten bases – identical in form and effect to *Cardboard Heroes* bases, but larger – come with the 23 figures. The art is small enough not to offend, and is approximately 25mm. Finally, there is an 11" x 17" sheet of one-inch squares for small-scale combat sequences.

Overview

James Bond 007 does a good job of simulating the Bond milieu. It won't make me give up *Espionage*, but I was intrigued by some of the game mechanics, impressed by the flow of play, and glad of the background detail involved.

Bond aficionados looking for a decent game will find it here. Gamemasters for practically *any* contemporary RPG should look into the *Q Manual*. And the price isn't bad. I give the game a qualified recommendation; it's a valid effort, and generally does what it set out to do.

*James Bond 007 (Victory Games): **Basic Game:** $12.95. 10½" x 8" 160-page rulebook, perfect-bound; 12 character sheets; two ten-sided dice, two six-sided dice, boxed. **Q Manual:** $9.95. One 137-page 10½" x 8" rulebook, perfect-bound. **Gamesmaster Pack:** $8.95. One gamemaster shield (eight panels, two-sided full color); pad of character sheets; sheet of cardboard miniatures; ten plastic bases for miniatures. Game designed by Gerry Klug, Gregory Gordon, Neil Randall, and Robert Kern. Published 1983.* **SG**

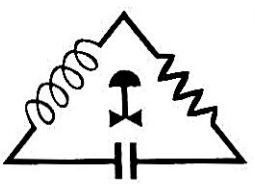
GALAC-TAC

a galactic scale space conquest PBM game

- Design all ships that make up your star fleet
- Move some, none, or all of your units in a single turn
- Full color maps
- Reports are color enhanced
- Form alliances, negotiate deals [and break them!]
- Moderated by computer AND humans!

BASIC GAME

Set-up and pre-move . . . 7.00
Rulebook 10.00
First move 3.00
Each move thereafter . . . 4.00



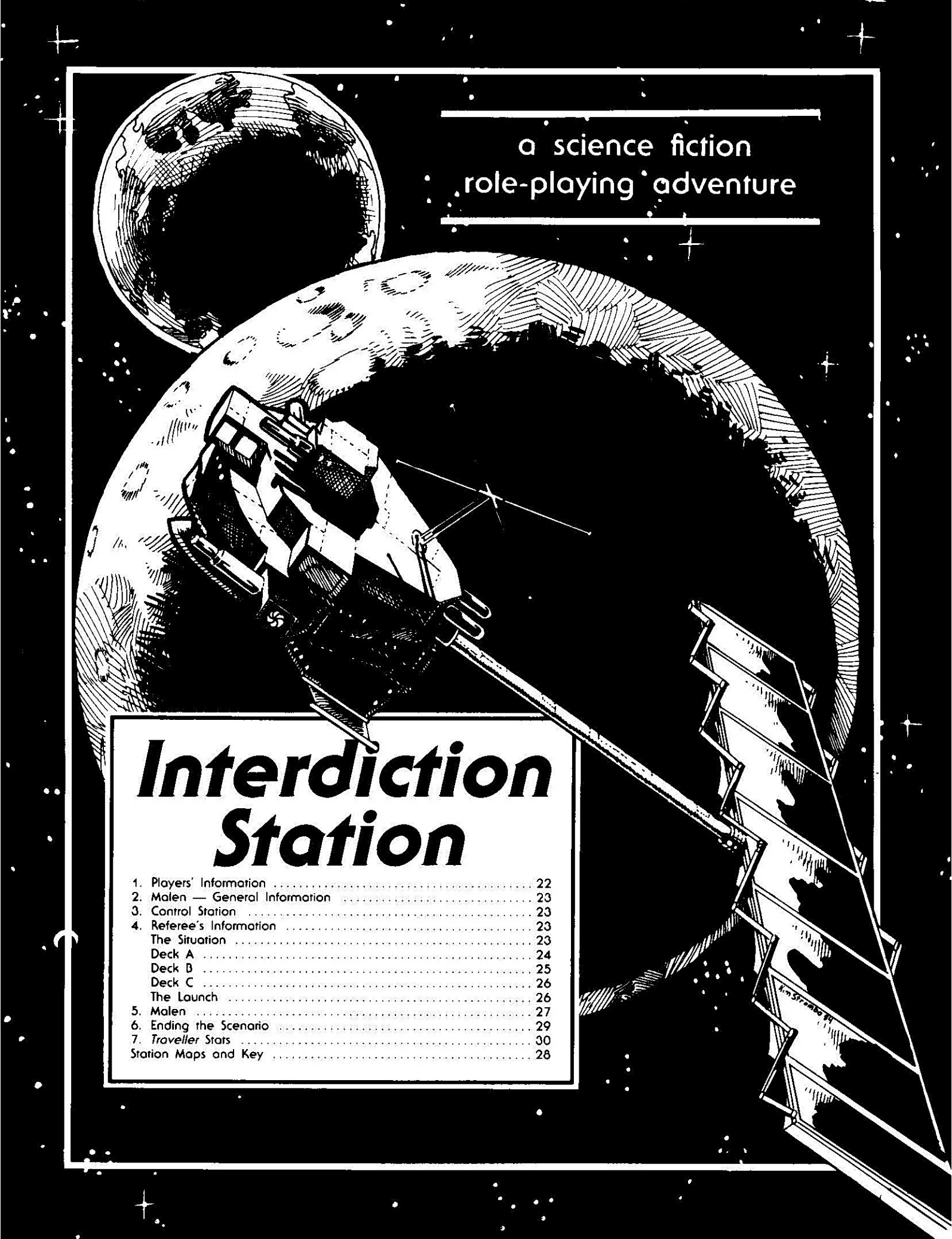
TO GET STARTED, SEND $20 TO:

PHOENIX PUBLICATIONS

P.O. Box 280237 • Dallas, TX 75228

[Allow four to six weeks for set up]

a science fiction role-playing adventure



Interdiction Station

1. Players' Information 22
2. Malen — General Information 23
3. Control Station 23
4. Referee's Information 23
   The Situation 23
   Deck A 24
   Deck B 25
   Deck C 26
   The Launch 26
5. Malen 27
6. Ending the Scenario 29
7. *Traveller* Stats 30

Station Maps and Key 28

Interdiction Station

designed by Marcus L. Rowland
developed by Warren Spector and Creede Lambard, with David Noel

illustrated by Kim Strombo
map graphics by C. Mara Lee
playtested by Norman Banduch, Christopher Frink, Sharleen Lambard, and David Noel

Interdiction Station is an adventure for three to six players. It was designed for use with *Traveller*, GDW's science fiction role-playing game. All statistics (for NPCs, weapons, equipment, aliens, and worlds encountered) are given in *Traveller* terms. In keeping with our policy of publishing only "generic" game supplements and adventures, we have tried to include detailed descriptions of all NPCs, weapons, equipment, aliens, and worlds. If you play FGU's *Space Opera*, TSR's *Star Frontiers*, SPI's *Universe*, Fasa's *Star Trek: The Role Playing Game*, or any other SF RPG, we encourage you to make use of these descriptions; any SF RPG worth its salt has lasers, space stations, vacuum suits, advanced medical facilities, and the like. With a little imagination on your part (and the descriptions we've provided of game-specific items), you should be able to find equivalents for just about anything your players will run into in *Interdiction Station*.

Of course, there are some elements of the *Traveller* system which have no equivalents in other science fiction role-playing games. None of the basic character attributes are too surprising. One of the *skills* is unique, however, and it may come into play no matter which game system you use to play *Interdiction Station*. The skill is called "Jack-of-all-Trades" (or J-o-T), and it represents a generalized ability to figure out how to repair or operate equipment encountered in the course of an adventure. J-o-T is a character's ability to "tinker" with things, to jury-rig mechanical and electronic devices. If you don't play *Traveller*, chances are your characters don't have J-o-T as one of their skills. If this is the case, you have two options: Ignore this particular skill when it comes into play during *Interdiction Station*, or "jury-rig" an equivalent skill (perhaps by using INT minus 10 to arrive at a simulated J-o-T skill level). All other *Traveller* skills necessary to the successful completion of *Interdiction Station* are sufficiently common that finding equivalents in any science fiction role-playing game should be relatively simple.

The use of these skills is a bit less simple and, since *Traveller*-specific die rolls are used throughout *Interdiction Station*, you will need to know something about how the *Traveller* skill-use system works in order to arrive at logical alternatives using your favorite game system.

At several points in the adventure which follows, the game master is instructed to allow the players to make specific skill-use rolls in order to accomplish a task or find a bit of information. The format for such skill-use instructions is this: "The players can attempt to rig the computer so it will act as an electronic watchdog (Roll 8+, DMs: +Computer, +J-o-T)." This means, simply, that in order to accomplish the task, the players must make a roll of eight or better on *two six-sided dice*; they will be allowed die modifiers if they have Computer skill, or Jack-of-all-Trades skill. Sometimes, the specific die modifier will be provided ("DM +1 if Medical"). In the example above, no specific DM is suggested. This means the players add their *skill level* to their die roll. In *Traveller*, players begin with no skills; they have no computer experience, no vacuum suit experience, and so on. In the course of generating and playing a character, skills are, of course, acquired. Someone with limited computer experience has a skill level of one (Computer-1); someone with a bit more computer experience may achieve skill level two, three, four, or higher (Computer-2, -3, -4, etc.). When instructed to use a DM for Computer, then, the characters add their skill level.

If you choose to play *Interdiction Station* using a game system other than *Traveller*, you have several options concerning skill use. If your system uses percentile rolls (1-100 rolled on 2D10), you can either use the 2D6 rolls provided in *Interdiction Station* (using DMs where provided, ignoring them where no specific DM is suggested) *or* you can use the percentile rolls required in your system. For example, if a character is required to make a roll of 8+ (DMs for Medical, Brawling), you *could* just go ahead and roll eight or better on 2D6. It may not be true to your game system, but it *is* simple. As an alternative, you could go down the list of your character's skills, noting that your character has First Aid, say, at 65%, and Street Fighting at 23%. You *could* assume that these skills are roughly analogous to the *Traveller* skills used as DMs in the example above and make a straight percentile roll against First Aid in order to accomplish the task. The game master must make the final decision about what *is* and is *not* an equivalent skill.

If the game you play uses 2D6 or 3D6 rolls, you also have some options as far as skill use is concerned. Like your friend who uses percentile rolls, you could just go ahead and use the 2D6 rolls given in *Interdiction Station*, applying DMs where they are provided, ignoring them where they are not specifically suggested. As an alternative, you could adapt your rules for skill use to this scenario, using your game's skills and skill levels. This requires a bit more work on your part, but you will be able to play *Interdiction Station* using your favorite game rules.

Game masters wishing to convert this scenario to other systems should note that it depends on the team being isolated for prolonged periods of time. If the rules under which you play allow rapid interstellar travel without long delay (in other words, if you play *Space Opera*, *Star Trek*, or a similar game), give some reason for keeping normal ship traffic out of the area. For example, in *Space Opera*, ships use the TISA drive, and are visible at interplanetary distances, making secrecy impossible. You could suggest that the Malenese are known to have instruments capable of detecting vehicles the size of a starship, making it imperative that normal traffic be rerouted, and keeping supply runs to a minimum. Characters must depend on their own resources, rather than simply summoning help if trouble develops.

NOTE: Players may be given data from Sections 1-3 *only*. All other information is for the referee's use. Players will have to work to find out what is going on.

1. Players' Information

The players are members of the crew of the IISS *Rim Warlock*, a converted 400-ton armed freighter supplying scout bases and stations in various star systems. One such station is a concealed interdiction unit orbiting Malen, a world whose natives

are not yet ready for contact. Since the Malenese could detect a full-sized starship near their planet, normal procedure is to rendezvous with the station launch in the system's asteroid belt.

On this occasion, the freighter arrives exactly on time, but the launch is missing. After 24 hours the Captain risks maser and laser signals, but there is no reply. Eventually he decides to send the ship's boat and a small team (the players) to investigate.

While the boat is refuelled and supplied, the team is briefed. As soon as they are ready to leave, the boat will be launched. The ship will refuel at the system's gas giant and return to the rendezvous a week later. No communication will be possible until then, since the maser transmitters are directional, making it difficult to contact a moving vessel.

2. Malen — General Information

Malen is a Terra-norm world, 8000 miles in diameter. Its atmosphere is dense, and well able to support human life. Seventy percent of the planet's surface is water. The thirty percent which is dry land supports a population of 100,000,000 Malenese. Malen was colonized many thousands of years ago by the first Imperium, but following the collapse of the Imperium, all contact with the human colony on Malen was lost. The colony reverted to barbarism. Over the years, the Malenese developed a "feudal technocratic" government. ("Ruling functions are performed by specific individuals for persons who agree to be ruled by them. Relationships are based on the performance of technical activities which are mutually beneficial.") Under Malenese law, it is illegal to own weaponry more deadly or technologically advanced than pistols, rifles, shotguns, and the like. Malenese technology corresponds roughly to that of late-twentieth century Earth.

These facts were learned about a century before this adventure takes place, when the Scout Service rediscovered the planet Malen. The Scouts learned the local language, and gathered enough data through long-range observation to deduce the colony's origins. The natives would normally be ready for contact, but for one unusual factor – through a combination of genetic drift, disease, and dietary deficiencies, the average height of Malenese natives is well under a meter. Service psychologists fear that allowing them to learn that they are the smallest race of humans would lead to the development of a devastating cultural inferiority complex.

The system consists of seven worlds. Malen is the only one capable of supporting human life. There is one ringed gas giant and a dense asteroid belt with a high potential mineral yield. Malen has three moons. The first orbits the planet at a height of 75,360 kilometers and has a diameter of 2000 miles. The second is in orbit 117,151 kilometers above Malen, and has a diameter of 1000 miles. The last is 312,875 kilometers up, and is 3000 miles in diameter. Malen is interdicted by a manned station supported by several small satellites. The station is in a stable orbit behind Malen's outermost moon.

3. Control Station

The interdiction station was built from prefabricated parts with a minimum of detectable electronic and nucleonic equipment. It has a 400-ton hull fitted with a solar power unit and a backup fusion power plant, usually shut down to minimum maintenance levels. Low power ion maneuver drives are fitted for a maximum 1g acceleration under fusion power, 0.25g with solar cells. The station is an unstreamlined dispersed structure. Normal crew is four, but it will accommodate up to ten. Supply endurance is 300 days' food and air supplies, 20 days' drive (without solar power). Weapons are a laser/missile/sandcaster mix in a triple turret.

A small launch (maximum acceleration: 4g; capacity: pilot plus five passengers, six tons cargo, missile launcher) is provided for routine transport and emergency gas scooping.

Duty tours are four months (excluding transport time) with supply deliveries every second month.

The satellites which support the station are primarily designed to monitor communications, but they also mount four-shot missile launchers. Each satellite weighs 4.7 tons and costs MCr 6.74, and carries a powerful video camera, a recorder, all-wave communications receiver, a maser transceiver, and a small computer. They have low-power gas thrusters for orbital corrections, solar panels, and thermal demolition charges designed to reduce the satellite to slag without any visible explosion. In normal use each satellite monitors Malen (or its assigned target) and stores data for daily transmission to the station. If necessary, an operator can take direct control of the satellite for real-time monitoring of a particularly interesting event, or to use its weapons. There are five of these satellites, in the following locations:

Two at Malen outer moon L4 and L5 stable points;
One in 50,000-km polar obit around Malen;
One in orbit around gas giant;
One at the asteroid-belt rendezvous point.

The belt and gas giant remotes are normally set to detect incoming vessels, concentrating on starship communication, distress frequencies, IFF (Identify Friend or Foe) beacon patterns, and drive radiation.

The station also carries 20 one-shot probes for close observation of the planet. They are designed to skim the atmosphere for later recovery, or to penetrate to a few kilometers above the surface and then self-destruct. Each probe carries a recording camera, atmospheric sensors, a squeal transmitter (for high-speed transmission of information), and self-destruct charges. Probes cost Cr 42,500 each. They look like small meteors, and are launched by solid-fuel rocket boosters.

4. Referee's Information

Before leaving the ship, the team will be issued vacc suits and ration packs. They may also request additional equipment to supplement their own gear. The following equipment is available but it will not be provided unless the team requests it or asks the Captain for advice – the ship's quartermaster is extremely mean, and won't volunteer anything:

1 each Engineer, Electronic, and Electrical toolkits;
2 hand computers, 4 calculators;
1 radiation detector;
1 air analyzer:
2 medical kits;
Filter masks – six boxes of 12;
4 hand lanterns;
1 pair light intensifier goggles;
1 vacuum welding set.

All other equipment is either unavailable, broken, or in short supply. The quartermaster will be very unwilling to part with the stores he *does* have, making several excuses before each item is produced. Unless the team is completely unarmed, the Captain will not provide any weapons. Those potentially available are two snub pistols (see Compartment 18, Deck B), a laser carbine, and four tear gas grenades.

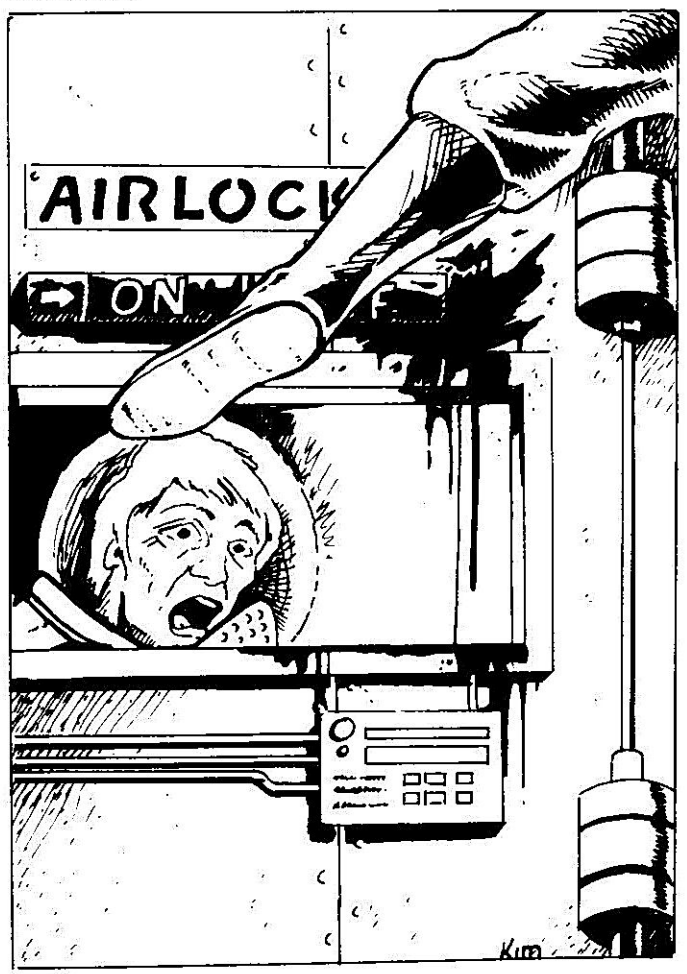
There is room for up to 200 kg of additional stores in the cabin of the launch, the hold being full of supplies for the station.

The journey to the station will take 18 hours, and will be entirely without incident. On arrival the team will find the station's launch docked to a lower airlock. The main lock is slightly open. There will be no response to any signals.

The station has four crew-members, all of whom are dead or unconscious: Four days before the team's arrival, an air-recycler malfunctioned, coinciding with an electrical short which cut out the air purity alarms. As a result, the atmosphere was fouled by carbon dioxide, alcohol, and other metabolic products. The smell was masked by the general aroma of

oil, ozone, food, old socks, and sweat generally found in closed environments, and the crew became intoxicated before noticing their danger. The station's air is noxious. Team members must wear vacc suits or filter masks at all times or they, like the station crew, will begin to act irrationally and eventually lose consciousness. If the players do remove their vacc suits, effects will be felt as follows: An unusual smell will be noticed immediately. After the first hour, the players will begin to feel lightheaded. After the second hour without vacc suits, the players may begin to feel drunk, giddy, or even dangerously deranged. (Specific effects during this stage are left to the discretion of the game master. Player characters should be told to act strangely, but stay in character.) After the third hour, players will begin to feel sleepy and lethargic. After the fourth hour, they will fall into a sleep verging on coma. Putting vacc suits back on will reverse the effects described above almost immediately. In order to determine what is wrong with the station's air, the players can check an air analyzer – if they thought to bring one along. If they didn't bring one, they will have to jury-rig something to perform the same function. This is only possible in the sick bay. A full explanation of how this can be done is included in the sick bay description (Compartment 15, Deck B).

The investigating team would, of course, have no way of knowing this, but in the hours before the station's original crew collapsed, all behaved irrationally, with the following specific effects:



Scout Mary Fong tried to use the airlock without suiting up, with fatal consequences.

The Team Leader, Jason Hobart, "played" with the computer and corrupted its programs badly, then collapsed in his cabin.

The medic, Assistant Team Leader Powell Johnson, programmed the autodoc to remove his own appendix, stomach, and spleen. He is still in the machine and won't recover without major transplant surgery.

The fourth member of the station crew, Scout Peter Tisley, is in a coma, suffering from kidney failure. Before collapsing, he punctured some of the emergency vacc suits in the station, wrecked the workshop, burnt his name into the bulkhead of his room, and fired a probe at Malen without bothering to arm its self-destruct charges.

Once the team reaches the station it will need to enter and investigate. With the station launch docked, the only entrance to the station is the main air lock, designed for docking with much larger craft. It will not form an airtight seal with the ship's boat, and vacc suits will be needed to enter the station.

The station description which follows contains some information which will be visible at a casual glance, and some which will not be apparent to player characters. Use your discretion in describing the situation aboard the station.

Devices found at various points around the station are EE-VAC suits, marked "*," and fire extinguishers, marked "F":

EE-VAC suits are short-term emergency vacuum suits, made of thin plastic with a ten minute air supply. They are self-inflating once a rip cord is pulled, and can be donned in 30 minus DEX seconds. Some are faulty (see the notes on Tisley above) and will refuse to inflate. Roll 8+ for a suit to be faulty. On a second roll of 9+, players notice it without a careful examination. EE-VAC suits cost Cr 150, give no armor protection, and cannot be re-used. They are fairly common devices, and characters will be able to use them without instructions.

All fire extinguishers are dry foam types designed to work without polluting the air. Unfortunately, this type of extinguisher tends to leave a gummy residue which can disable delicate machinery. Characters won't automatically know this since most ships use gas-filled extinguishers.

If any attempt is made to use any computer terminal in the station see the notes on Compartment 16, Deck B.

Deck A:

1. Maneuver control room. All controls are standard, though slightly old-fashioned. This compartment is one of several with laminated photochromic glass windows. The glass is 15 cm thick and is equivalent to a minimally armored ship's hull. (Factor 1 armor, in ***Traveller*** terms.) The glass offers no protection against laser penetration. The iris valves in this compartment, and throughout the station, are an old design operating normally except that power is used to open rather than close them. If the motors or power cables are damaged, they will slam closed without sensing any obstructions that may be present. Each valve originally carried a warning sticker, but all are now missing or obliterated. There is an inconspicuous panel in the bulkhead by each valve, concealing a hand crank which will open the valve in 3–4 rounds, if it is not locked. (On a roll of 10+, the iris valve is locked. It takes 40 minus (DEX + INT) rounds to unlock. Shooting the lock mechanism *doubles* the number of rounds it takes to open the valve. Once unlocked, it will not lock by itself.)

2. Shaft to dorsal turret.

3. Dorsal (triple) turret. Sandcaster (lessens effectiveness of beam weapons) / Missile / Laser.

4. Store room. Houses launcher for probes, a rack of probes and solid propellant charges, and miscellaneous equipment and supplies. The floor is littered with hundreds of 5mm ball bearings, spilled by Tisley. Seven spaces in the probe rack are empty: once the computer is repaired, a log check will show that only six are recorded as used.

5. Life support. All machinery in this compartment shows signs of overheating, and three pumps are burnt out. All the stores needed to repair it are kept in Compartment 6. Repairs will take 15 hours, less D6 hours per level of Jack-of-all-Trades (J-o-T) or Engineering skill used. If players repair the life support system, they will no longer have to wear vacc suits. Once the unit is repaired, however, there is a slight chance of another failure, on a 3D6 roll of 16+. Roll each day. The alarm system must be repaired separately.

6. Access to engines and storage area for engineering spares.
7. Greenhouse. Filled with plants from various worlds. Characters with medical or botanical knowledge will recognize three mild narcotic herbs and a powerful type of laxative berry.
8. Drive rooms. Two ion drive units, combined thrust 0.25g under solar power, 1g under fusion power.
9. Shaft to lower decks. Hatches at each level are rigged to close automatically if air pressure on either side drops by 20% or more.

Deck B:
10. Main air lock with adaptor (5-meter extension). Mary Fong's corpse is floating in the lock, with a loose shoe stopping the outer valve from closing. The body is an unpleasant sight, and anyone seeing it must make a roll of 15+ (DMs: +END, +Vacc) to avoid vomiting. If team members are wearing space suits when this occurs and fail to save, a roll of 9+ must be made to avoid a suit malfunction. Roll D6 for possible suit malfunctions:

(1) Suit air supply restricted; occupant takes D2 points suffocation damage before suit removed.

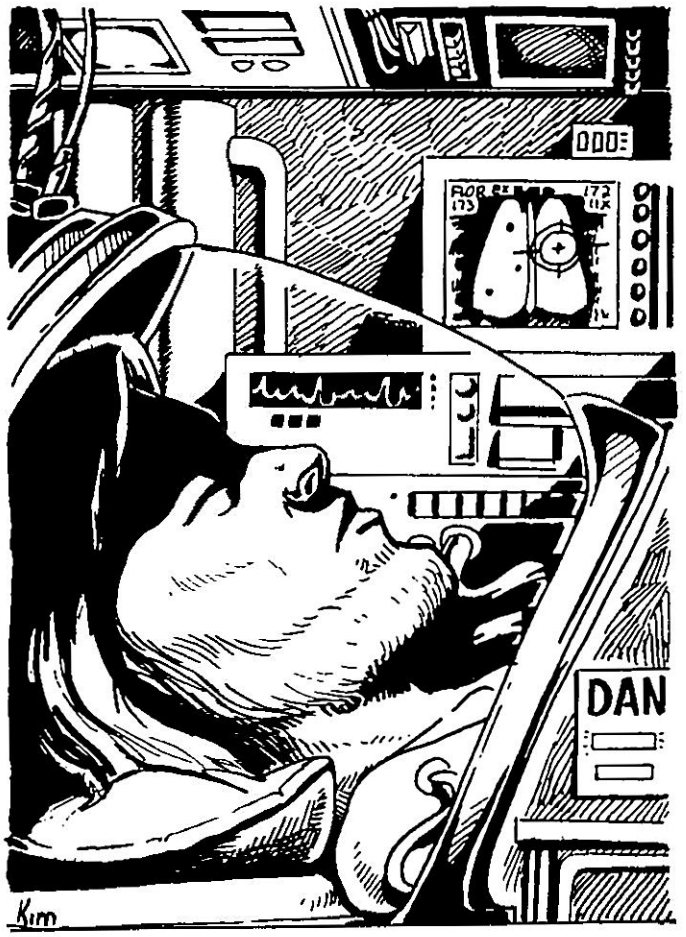
(2) Suit exhaust blocked, pressure builds inside. Occupant must remove helmet, taking two points damage (decompression effects). Note: Unless the suit is cleaned and put on again, players forced to remove their helmets will begin to feel the intoxicating effects of the station's air.

(3) Electrical short, radio fails.

(4) Electrical fault, all power lost. Occupant takes 2-4 points damage from suffocation per minute until suit removed. All equipment (e.g., radio, beacon, lights) useless.

(5+) Visor obscured, occupant blinded until helmet removed or visor opened.

It takes an hour to clean and disinfect a suit after vomiting, more time being required for repairs if the suit malfunctions. It is considered extremely bad manners to ask someone else to clean a contaminated suit or to repair it before it is cleaned.
11. Suit store and recharge room. Able to recharge a maximum of eight vacc suits. There are four suits present. All have been refilled from the *contaminated* air supply (and will have the same effect as breathing the station air if used), but none will fit team members without some modification.
12. Lavatory (Head).
13. Workshop. The workshop holds all normal Electrical, Electronic, Mechanical, and Plumbing tools, all made to Tech Level 11. (TL 11 is about halfway between where we are now and the world of *Star Trek* – high-powered lasers are old hat, but the transporter room is years in the future.) The tools are lying in a large heap on the floor, covered with a mixture of paint and epoxy resin. On top of the pile is an empty welding torch. There are several containers of paint and epoxy solvent in Compartment 4. They are toxic. It will require 1-3 cans of solvent to clean up all the tools, with a DM of +1 on the day's life support system failure roll for each can of solvent opened – this is strong stuff, and could overload the jury-rigged air purification system.
14. Commons. Facilities include a small robot chef unit, entertainment and music consoles, and a library of hard-copy books. The room is untidy, with broken chairs and torn books scattered over the floor.
15. Sickbay. Facilities include an autodoc (A) and two bunks with life support and monitoring facilities (B). Powell Johnson is in the autodoc, under heavy sedation. If characters are not wearing helmets or filter-masks (and are still lucid), they will notice a pungent smell in the room. A careful examination of the autodoc will also reveal the organs in the waste box. One of the bunks can be removed and used as a litter with minimal life support facilities, if required. On a roll of 8+ (DM: +Medical) this will keep Johnson alive on the journey back to the *Rim Warlock.* If the players move Johnson from the autodoc to a litter, the autodoc will report that the air is impure, and that moving him from his stabilized environment may endanger his life. If the players think of it, they can attempt to rig



the autodoc so it will perform a complete air analysis. (Roll 9+, DMs: Medical, Computer, and J-o-T). If successful, they will learn that the air has been fouled by large quantities of carbon dioxide, alcohol, other metabolic products, oil, ozone, food, old socks, and sweat.
16. Computer and *satellite monitoring and control room.* Linked to multi-waveband receivers (16A) and maser transceiver (16B). Capacities include translation of up to six simultaneous transmissions, and routine control of all the satellites. Although nothing shows externally, the computer is seriously deranged, and full debugging will take 30 hours less D6 hours per level of computer skill. It is a very bad idea to switch the computer off, since all data and programs would be lost. If the computer *is* switched off, it will take a week to reboot all of the programs from backup systems. Weapons (both offensive and defensive), library functions, navigation systems, maneuvering systems, and lighting will be inoperative until the computer is once again working. Three days after powering up, ship's systems will begin to come on. Roll 10+ (no DMs) for any particular system to return on any given day. (Bear in mind, the players will have to go about their business in the dark until they get the lighting system working again.) After 168 hours have passed, *all* systems not already operational will begin functioning again. Until the computer is debugged, the following events will take place:

(a) Any signal to the satellite monitors will activate the drives at 0.25g thrust. Each activation causes D6 thousand credits worth of damage to the solar panel system and reduces available solar power by 10%, since the panels should be locked in place before the engines are used. If the team has not docked the launch to the lower lock it will be left behind, since the main lock (10) is designed for a larger vessel.

(b) All attempts to access the current log or the observation records will result in a display of video games.

(c) Seventeen hours after the team's arrival the internal gravity system and lighting will cut out simultaneously. Once this fault occurs, all characters must make a save on 9+ (DMs:

+Vacc Suit, +1 if END 10+, -1 if END 6-) to avoid becoming disoriented and spacesick. Spacesickness gives a -2 DM on all skill use, and causes vomiting (see 10 above). It will take 20 minutes to override the computer's control of the grav system once a computer fault is suspected.

(d) The satellite destruct codes have been permanently deleted from memory. This will not be apparent unless the computer is asked to supply them, when a "NO DATA" signal will be produced.

It should be noted that, due to time lag, there is a -4 DM on missile fire from the satellites controlled by the computer, increasing to -6 in the asteroid belt and -8 at the gas giant. These factors will change if the station moves nearer to these satellites.

17. Exercise/recreation area. Equipped with exercise machines, hologram scene "windows," and other recreational items.

18. Store room (containing numerous frequently used items, e.g., power cells, suit tanks, etc.), with armory rack. Armory rack holds three military snub pistols, each with a belt of six 20-shot clips. The military snub pistol is an automatic designed for use on shipboard and in zero-G combat. Each clip holds 20 high-explosive cartridges. Each cartridge does 4D6 damage (or, a bit more than a modern assault rifle). The armory rack also holds three Advanced Combat Rifles (ACR) and four ammunition clips. The ACR is roughly equivalent to a modern assault rifle like the M16. It does 4D6 damage per high-explosive cartridge. The ACR is capable of semi- or fully automatic fire (four shots per pull of trigger). The armory rack also holds five cutlasses and three vials of combat drug. Combat drug adds two points to both STR and END. It takes effect two rounds after being ingested, lasts for 30 rounds, and does 1D6 damage to the user when it wears off.

19. Single cabin. This cabin has a computer terminal and is usually reserved for the team leader. The compartment is tidy, with the exception of some dirty linen on the floor. Jason Hobart is lying on the bed, snoring loudly. He wears his full ceremonial uniform and is clutching a battered teddy bear. He is in a coma but will recover after 4D6 hours breathing pure air.

20. Single cabin. Tisley is lying on the floor. His skin is slightly yellow and his pulse and respiration are extremely rapid. Burnt on the cabin walls are the words "Tisley Was Here." Tisley has vomited on the floor and bed. Unless promptly treated, he will die in 1-4 hours from total kidney failure. Characters with medical skill should roll 9 or better (DM: +Medical) to cure him. The autodoc gives a +4 modifier to this roll, but medical skill 2+ is required to use it.

21. Lavatory (Head).

22, 23. Double cabins. Each has a third folding bunk for extra personnel. 22 was occupied by Fong, and 23 by Johnson. Their clothing will be found if the cabins are searched, but nothing of any significance.

24. Girder to solar panels.

Deck C:

25. Launch docking and reception area, with airlock tube down to launch cabin and docking cradle controls.

26, 27. Holds (26 is refrigerated for food and medicines).

28. Fusion power plant.

Launch:

A: Cabin (six seats, rear four removable for extra cargo).

B: Lavatory (Head).

C: Fuel scoops.

A 5-ton hold is located under the cabin.

Overall

In addition to the faults described above, the station is in extremely poor general condition. The air purifier failure was not an isolated occurrence – sixty years have passed since the station was built, and it has never been given a full dockyard service. Continuous computer monitoring controlled most of the problems, but once the system was disrupted, minor faults started to turn into potential crises, which will become *actual* crises during the team's investigation. For each day that passes, roll 2D6; on 9+, a problem will develop. Roll 2D6 *again* to determine the severity of the problem:

2-7:	Reroll on minor faults table
8-10:	Reroll on serious faults table
11+:	Reroll on crisis table

Minor Faults: (Minor faults occur in a single compartment or small area. Roll 3D10-2 to determine which compartment or area has been affected.)

2-4:	Light failure
5-7:	Intercom failure (one station only)
8-9:	Jammed iris valve
10-11:	Jammed hatch
12:	Computer terminal breakdown (one terminal only)

Serious Faults: Roll 2D6:

2-3:	Slow air leak
4-5:	Slow fuel leak
6-7:	Intercom failure (all stations)
8:	Light failure (one full deck)
9:	Gravity failure (one full deck)
10:	Solar panel power reduced 10-60%
11:	Power failure (one full deck)
12:	Communications breakdown with D6-1 satellites

Crisis Table: Roll 2D6:

2:	Catastrophic air loss (hatch or window fails)
3:	Catastrophic fuel loss (valve or pipe fails)
4-5:	Computer failure (see discussion of computer – Compartment 16, Deck B)
6-7:	Total electrical failure
8-9:	Total gravity failure
10-11:	Fire, 1D4 compartments
12:	Fusion plant failure (1-5 power lost, can be repaired in 2D6 hours; on a roll of 6, plant is a total loss)

Referees may apply modifiers to these tables determined by the amount of time characters devote to maintenance and by the skill (or lack of it) used in the work. Players should *not* be asked to make such decisions before the first failure occurs.

At the end of a week, the team will be able to make contact with *Rim Warlock*. The captain will tell the team member (or members) with the best piloting and medical skill to ferry the survivors to the ship, then order the group to take over the station until a relief crew can be transferred to Malen. He adds that this will take 6-8 weeks, and will give the team a chance to show what a good job they can do.

Once the team has settled in on the station, the referee should allow approximately two weeks before the next crisis develops. This problem is the culmination of several years of work on Malen . . .

5. MALEN

Malen is a typical Terra-type planet, with four large continents and numerous small islands. A 30-degree axial tilt causes violent seasonal contrasts. The presence of three moons makes tides complex and tends to cause bad storms and frequent floods.

The Malenese are hardy and reasonably strong for their size, normal adults having the following characteristics:

Strength	D6+4	Dexterity	2D6+2
Endurance	2D6+3	Intelligence	2D6
Education	2D6	Social status	2D6
Height	75-85 cm	Weight	25-40 kg

Despite their small stature (30" to 34" in height, 55 lbs. to 88 lbs. in weight), the Malenese are a hearty people. Their strength is just a bit less than human, on average. Their average dexterity and endurance is a bit *higher* than the average Earth dweller. In intelligence, the Malenese are in every way our equal – their relative lack of technological progress is a result of climatary and other natural disasters. Their life has not been easy and their progress is admirable in light of the difficulties they have had to face and overcome. Despite their lack of contact with the mainstream of humanity, the Malenese have developed along the same lines as humans elsewhere. Like other off-shoots of humanity, the Malenese can be gentle and fierce, by turns. They can be understanding at one moment and pig-headed and narrow-minded the next. They can be remarkably cooperative and fiercely territorial. They are, in short, human. Many of their cultural, social, educational, and governmental institutions would fit in on any of the human race's myriad worlds.

Their Feudal Technocratic government developed as a result of centuries of natural disasters, mostly caused by high tides or storms. Organizations which coordinated relief work and the construction of flood defenses gradually took power from the former rulers, a hereditary religious aristocracy. This dependence on engineering has caused a general respect for all forms of technology and science. In a typical Malenese city, the chief government officials are the leaders of the Fire Brigade, Flood Control organization, and Police, the President of the local university, engineering guild members, and the senior doctor of the largest hospital in the area. All are active in their professions, and government meetings are held over computer and picture-phone links rather than in person. The leader of the city government is the city's representative to the planetary government.

There is one world-wide language, Malenali, with minor dialect variants in different regions. Most areas are linked to a world-wide communications net carrying news, entertainment, and educational programming. The most popular form of entertainment is a type of stylized serial resembling a soap opera with poetic and musical interpolations. After a few weeks, all Scouts in the interdiction station learn either to love or hate this style, which is used in approximately 65% of transmissions.

For over a century the Malenese have suspected that they are not native to Malen. No native mammals are sufficiently humanoid to make a close relationship likely, and there are no fossil records of any ancestral species.

The Malenese had developed large optical telescopes by the time the Scouts rediscovered their world. They sighted the L5 satellite monitor a few years after its installation. It was, however, assumed to be an accumulation of meteoric debris, and was often used as a benchmark for observations. Over the years, the natives have noticed two slight shifts in its orbit, both caused by micro-meteor impacts and followed by a return to the original orbit after a few days, as the thrusters pushed it back in place. Astronomers have also detected faint radio signals from other colonized systems, the nearest being eight parsecs away. They have yet to interpret these signals, but believe them to have intelligent origins.

Until recently these facts were seldom associated by the Malenese, but a computer program relating several scientific disciplines linked them as evidence of an alien origin. Malenese scholars did not deduce the presence of the interdiction station, but suspected the L5 monitor of being part of a larger craft which brought humanity to Malen. As a consequence, there was a world-wide search for further evidence, and a manned spacecraft is being prepared for an eventual mission to the L5 satellite. The flight has received some prominence in the local news media, but the fact that it will actually visit the L5 point has not been mentioned – there is religious opposition to the "Alien Origin" theory and the scientists prefer to announce any discoveries after the mission, rather than arousing controversy beforehand.

This was the situation until the day before the team reached the station.

The probe Tisley fired at Malen was launched very accurately, and penetrated to the surface, landing in a lake near a major university. The fall was witnessed by a group of students and teachers who recovered the probe after a few hours of trawling with nets and magnets. They believed it to be a normal meteor. The probe was taken to the university's geology laboratory for immediate examination, and cut open to reveal its surprising contents.

The obvious alien construction of the probe's cameras and recorders was immediately reported to the government, which asked the scientists to keep the incident secret until the situation could be properly assessed. Since the probe was obviously almost new (its power pack is a type which loses its charge after just a few days, and there are traces of volatile sealing compounds in various areas) there was some alarm, and the alien origin hypothesis has been amended to include the possibility that Malen is still being observed from space. Some scientists have even suggested that the "L5 object" is an observation device, making immediate inspection even more essential.

Hshan Gusival (Star Dove), the Malenese probe ship, is a Tech Level 7 rocket (we are on the verge of TL 7 in 1984) using solid fuel boosters to fire a reusable aerodynamic vehicle into space. As the Malenese are smaller and lighter than normal humans, they require less food, less air, and less room, thus making it possible for a relatively small craft to be equipped for a prolonged flight. At launch, it weighs 2100 tons, but after boosters have been dropped, it is reduced to 350 tons. The ship can sustain a maximum of four minutes at full thrust apart from re-entry maneuvers. The ship's computer is powered by fuel cells. The missile launcher carries four small scientific probes (equipped with cameras and transmitters) plus two hastily-installed wire-guided missiles (fired with -2 DM to hit, -1 DM on penetration, range 5 km). The price quoted below is an approximation, based on the capital costs of the vessel's construction and development of the necessary industries. It has a four-week supply endurance.

The flight plan is for the vessel to rendezvous with the "L5 object," take pictures and instrument readings, and then fire its probes to other interesting positions – to the L4 stable point, and to orbits around the three moons. If anything interesting is detected, the Malenese ground controllers will launch a supply drone to rendezvous with the vessel, allowing it to continue investigating. Otherwise it will return to Malen after three weeks.

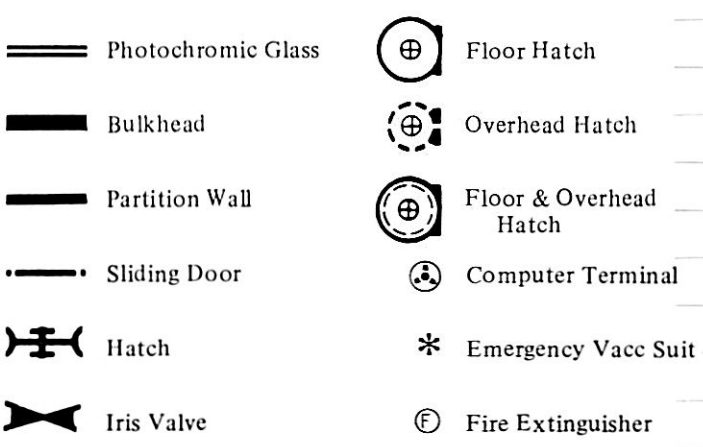
Since the L5 mission will be firing its probes near the orbits used by the interdiction station and its satellites, it is very likely that the Malenese will spot something. Unless the L5 observation satellite can be moved or destroyed before the *Hshan Gusival* reaches it, the Malenese crew will certainly spot it. They will make a full examination, and may even decide to take it back to Malen *if* their probes at L4 and in the vicinity of the moons uncover nothing else.

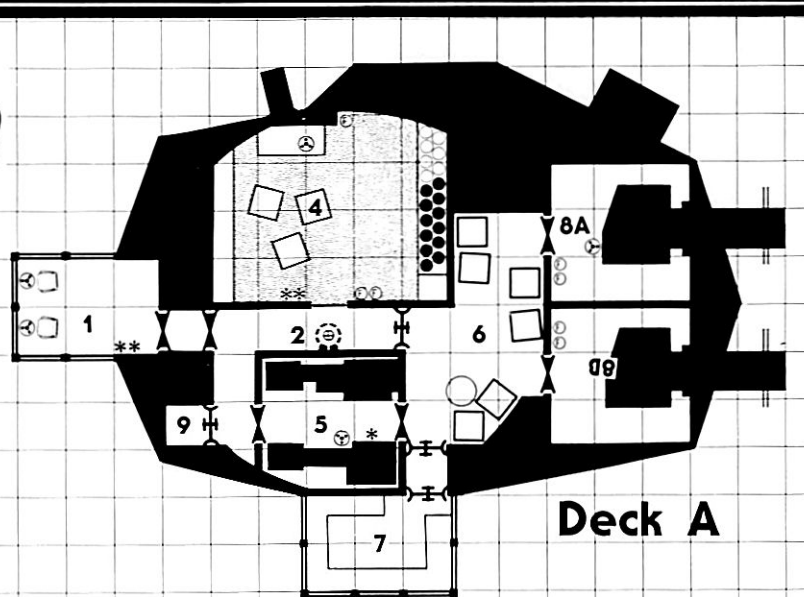
On a roll of 5+ on 2D6, the Malenese probes will sight the L4 observation satellite *in addition to* the one at L5. If the 2D6 roll was eight or more, the Malenese will spot the interdiction station. Ignoring the two satellites for the moment, they will turn their attention to the station itself. They will approach, dock, and board the station, conducting as thorough a search as they can – or, as the players choose to allow. If the players choose not to interfere with the Malenese, the astronauts from the planet below will spend a week investigating and then return to Malen to report. If the crew of the station choose to confront the Malenese, they will meet three Malenese, unarmed, in primitive (late-twentieth century) space suits.

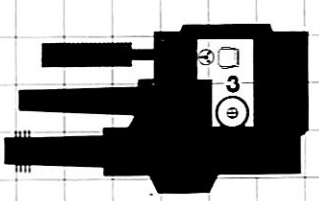
Each team member should be allowed a roll of 12+ (DM: +3 if the character has prior alien contact experience, plus any other relevant modifiers – as determined by the game master) to realize that the L5 mission is an ideal opportunity to make

Interdiction Station

INTERDICTION SATELLITE







Scale: 1 square = 1.5 meters

contact with the Malenese without triggering an unfavorable reaction. The Malenese will be in a buoyant psychological mood if they discover the interdiction station through their own efforts, and will probably not feel inferior unless the player team makes very bad mistakes.

6. Ending the Scenario

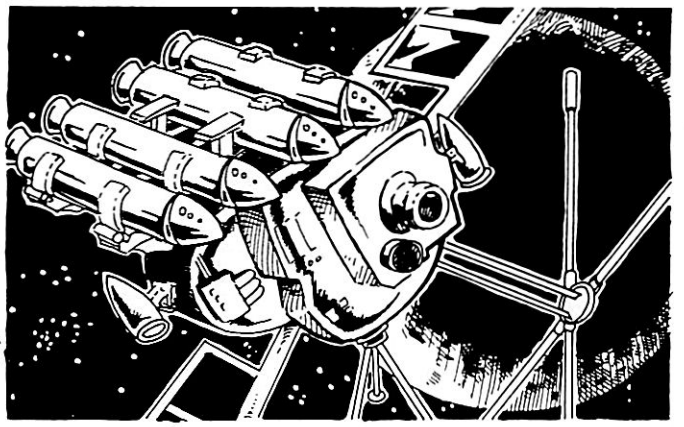
There are several possible outcomes to this scenario. These are summarized below:

1) The team avoids all contact with the Malenese and prevents them from learning anything significant from the flight. They accomplish this *without* resorting to violence. They will be relieved normally, congratulated on their devotion to duty, promoted, and assigned to another mission.

2) The team stops the Malenese from making contact or learning anything by *using force* (by destroying the *Hshan Gusival*, for example, and making it look to the Malenese on the planet's surface as though there had been an accident). They will be relieved normally and then brought before a board of inquiry. Although they will be exonerated, they will receive no further promotions and will be mustered out as soon as possible, after spending the rest of their terms in boring office jobs.

3) The team fails to make peaceful contact or to stop the Malenese from learning of their "quarantine." The reaction of their superiors will vary with the exact circumstances, but may vary from mild censure to dishonorable discharges.

4) The team contacts the Malenese but inadvertently triggers the expected psychological reaction. The team will be punished to an extent depending on the eventual outcome. If the ultimate result is a return to sanity and peaceful contact with the Imperium, team members may ultimately be congratulated and/or promoted. If there is a catastrophic reaction, the team will be court-martialled and possibly even shot.

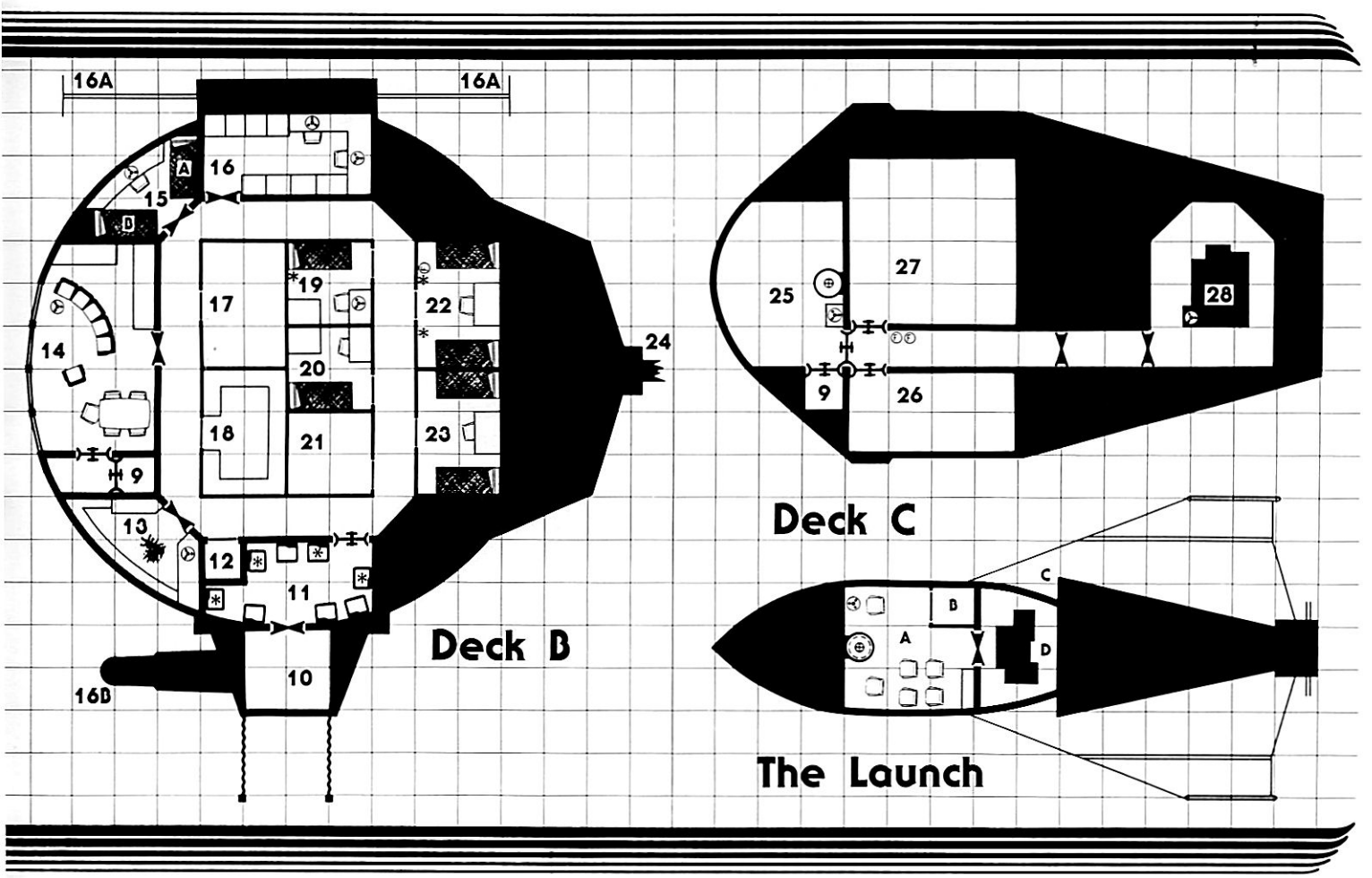


5) The team makes an entirely successful contact with the Malenese. A board of inquiry will be convened, which will eventually result in all the team members being promoted and decorated. On a roll of 10+ the team leader will be knighted or, if already of high social standing, raised another status step. If team members decide to leave the service at the end of this term, they should be given a +1 modifier on all material benefit rolls, unless some other event mars their records.

Should the scenario lead to some unexpected event (e.g., the team decides to plunder or conquer Malen), the referee should remember that Imperial forces are only a few weeks away, and that the *Rim Warlock* is more than a match for the station and the team's weaponry.

The original ideas for this scenario developed from incidents in a **Traveller** *campaign run in King's College, London, in Spring 1983; the song "Star Man" by David Bowie; and the film* **Dark Star**. *My thanks to all concerned.*

– Marcus L. Rowland



Interdiction Station Traveller Stats

1. *Malen:* Location classified. UPP: X887854 7. Interdicted.
2. *Malen's Moons:*
   1) Orbit 75,360 km, X200000 0.
   2) Orbit 117,151 km, X100000 0.
   3) Orbit 312,875 km, X300000 0.
3. *The Interdiction Station and support ships:*

Ship profiles as per Book 5, 2nd Edition – *High Guard*.

0413 Station MAL-1 SI-4701141-110000-10001-0		MCr. 186.16
Batteries bearing	1 1	Crew 4-10
Batteries	1 1	TL 12

Passengers-0; Low-0; Cargo-80; Fuel-10; EP-8; Marines-0; Agility-0.

The Interdiction Station weighs 400 tons. Dispersed Structure. No interstellar capability. Maximum 1g acceleration. Type 4 computer (about halfway between 20th century and *Star Trek*). Normal crew of four. Maximum crew of 10. No armor. One sandcaster (to lessen effect of beam weapons). One laser. One missile launcher (with three missiles).

Launch for above: QG-0106610-000000-00001-0 MCr. 19.6 TL 12
Passengers-5; Low-0; Cargo-8; Fuel-12; EP-1.8; Crew-1; Marines-0; Agility-6.

The Interdiction Staton launch weighs 30 tons. Wedge/Needle-shaped hull. No interstellar capabilities. Maximum 6g acceleration. Type 1 computer (late-twentieth century equivalent). One missile launcher (with three missiles).

4. *The Malenese Ship (Hshan Gusival):* LZ-3206611-000000-00001-0 MCr. 5000 TL 7

Passengers-2; Low-0; Cargo-25; Fuel-150; Agility-1; Crew-2.

The *Hshan Gusival* is an experimental lab ship. Cone-shaped. No interstellar capabilities. Maximum 6g acceleration. Type 1 computer (late-twentieth century equivalent). One missile launcher (with three missiles).

Interdiction Station — NPC Stats

Team Leader Jason Hobart (897AA7) 47 years old. 8th term in Scouts.
STR-8; DEX-9; END-7; INT-10; EDU-10; SOC. ST.-7; Computer-2; Pilot-2; Air/Raft-1; Vacc-2; Pistol-2; Leader-1; J-o-T-1.
Snub Pistol Travellers Aid Cr. 4520

Assistant Team Leader/Surgeon Powell Johnson (788BA8) 31 years old. 4th term.
STR-7; DEX-8; END-8; INT-11; SOC. ST.-8; Medical-3; Pilot-1; Vacc-0; Computer-2. Cr. 925

Scout Peter Tisley (AA898A) 25 years old. 2nd term.
STR-10; DEX-10; END-8; INT-9; EDU-8; SOC. ST.-10; Pilot-1; Brawling-1; Nav-1; Vacc-0; ACR-0. Cr. 940

Scout Mary Fong (7C888B) 23 years old. 2nd term.
STR-7; DEX-12; END-8; INT-8; EDU-8; SOC. ST.-11; Computer-2; Communication-1; Linguist-2; J-o-T-1. Cr. 1298

This information may be presented to the players if they ask for it (or if the referee feels such information would be a natural part of their pre-mission briefing). In any event, the players should be given no clue that the station's original crew is in any trouble. All they really know is that the station crew failed to show up at a regularly scheduled rendezvous and doesn't respond to signals from the *Rim Warlock*. The information above can be presented as the latest data on the station crew in the *Rim Warlock*'s computer banks.

TARSUS
World Beyond the Frontier

The letter from home brought bad news. The family ranch is in deep trouble, and your father needs help desperately. You and your companions, newly mustered out of Imperial Service, must travel beyond the Imperial borders to Tarsus, where the unexpected awaits . . .

Tarsus, *World Beyond the Frontier*, is a combination of **Traveller** supplement and adventure: a world mapped, described, and detailed for use by any **Traveller** referee and players. The world data book fully covers this single world, describing Tarsan history, geography, climate, flora and fauna, and the myriad other details that make this world unique among the millions in the known universe. Three maps are included, one of the dense tanglewood forest region, one of Tarsus as a whole, and one of District 268, the subsector which contains Tarsus.

Five separate scenario folders deal with different situations on Tarsus. Additional adventures take place naturally on the fully described world. Pre-generated characters are provided on handy cards which let the action begin immediately.

Tarsus. A comprehensive module for **Traveller**.
Boxed. $12.00.

Game Designers' Workshop

P.O. Box 1646, Bloomington, Illinois 61701
Free Catalog on Request

Capsule Reviews

Space Gamer reviews science fiction boardgames, role-playing games, computer games, play-by-mail games, and game supplements. We will review any SF game if the publisher sends us a copy. We do not guarantee reviews of historical games.

The staff will make reasonable efforts to check reviews for factual accuracy, but opinions expressed by reviewers are not necessarily those of the magazine.

Games and game items for which *Space Gamer* has assigned or received reviews include (The) ***Alien, Alien Armada, Boot Hill, Border Crossing, Capitol, Combots, Fleet Maneuvers, The Forever War, Galac-Tac, Illuminati, MSPE*** miniatures, ***Stormhaven, Super Heroes*** miniatures, ***Super Squadron, Suspended, Time Ship, Traveller*** miniatures, ***Villains & Vigilantes*** miniatures, ***Warboid World, Wild West***, and ***Wings Out of Shadow***.

Games and game items for which *Space Gamer* is seeking reviews include ***Adventurer's Club, Agent Dossiers (Top Secret), Battlecars, Burned Bush Wells, Cassiopeian Empire, Caverns of Callisto, The Company War, Cosmic Balance II – The Strategic Game, Famine in Far-Go, Fasolt in Peril, Forms and Charts, Free Trader, Gamma World*** (revised), ***Gamelord, Gateway to Tekumel, Hearts and Minds, High Ranger Guard, Lightning Bolts and Lasers, The Mind Masters, M.I.S.S.I.O.N., Murder on Arcturus Station, Operation: Fastpass, Operation Guardian, Operation Peregrine, Orient Express, Pentantastar, Race in Space, Recon, Scouts (Traveller Book 6), The Shady Dragon Inn, Spectre, Star Commander, Star Explorer, Star Fleet Battle Manual, Star Sector Atlas 2, Star Sentry, Starquest, Starship Captain, Sundown on Starmist, Superworld, Survival Force*** miniatures, ***Thunde'rin Guns, To Challenge Tomorrow, The Undersea Environment, The Vanishing Investigator, Volturnus/Planet of Mystery***, and ***Witness for the Defense***.

GAMES

TRAVELLER STARTER EDITION (Game Designers' Workshop); $10.00. Designed by Marc W. Miller. Contains game box, rules booklet, booklet of charts and tables, player's handouts, two adventures, and map. Three or more players, indefinite playing time. Published 1983.

The ***Starter Edition*** is the most recent incarnation of the ***Traveller*** rules (the others being ***Basic Traveller, Deluxe Traveller*** and *The Traveller Book*). In style and content, it most closely resembles GDW's hardbound *Traveller Book*, though at a $3.00 reduction in cost, and some differences in components and contents.

Starter Traveller is a major revision in style and packaging, obviously aimed at the same people who would purchase the "Basic Set" of another major RPG. In my eye, ***Traveller*** is the better buy, with better artwork, better writing style and content, and better game mechanics.

Artwork, for the most part, is identical to *The Traveller Book*, the major exception being different cover art on each. The rules are laid out in a similar fashion, incorporating the old Books 0, 1, 2, and 3 into one volume. As with *The Traveller Book*, all various forms and charts have been organized by subject (all forms and tables on planets are grouped together, for example). However, unlike *The Traveller Book*, the ***Starter Edition*** places these all into one booklet, a vast improvement, I feel, as it cuts down on the amount of time one spends leafing and looking for a particular set of charts.

The major differences between the two products comes with the material designed for adventuring. Both contain the same "Patron Encounters" (taken from Supplement 6, ***76 Patrons***). *The Traveller Book* contains a "Casual Encounter," the ***Starter Edition*** does not. *The Traveller Book* contains an "Amber Zone" reprinted from an early issue of the *Journal*, the ***Starter Edition*** does not. Both editions contain two adventures – *The Traveller Book* contains "Exit Visa" and "Shadows," the ***Starter Edition*** contains "Mission on Mithril" and "Shadows." The adventures are presented better in the ***Starter Edition***, as the boxed format allows GDW to break things down into separate components. Therefore, you have a separate map, player's handout, and referee's booklet. This makes running the adventure easier, as the referee does not have to photocopy, cut and paste the player's information in order to make a handout, or to "cover up" his portion when allowing the players to look in the book, etc.

My only complaints are that too much of the artwork is the same between *The Traveller Book* and the ***Starter Edition***. I wish that there could have been more diversity in the "action" illustrations.

I would recommend the ***Starter Edition*** for those who are interested in ***Traveller*** or those who are looking for a good edition of the rules to give to someone who is starting out in the game. The mix of material, rules and adventures makes it perfect for those who wish to play ***Traveller***, want to run some adventures without much work, and desire enough information on the ***Traveller*** universe without having to purchase several of the supplements. For those who already have ***Traveller*** in one of its incarnations, it is almost worth buying again. The adventure material and the separate charts booklet have proven very useful to me: I was not sorry to have bought ***Traveller*** again (for the fourth time!).

– Frederick Paul Kiesche III

SILO 14 (Jersey Devil/Centurion Games); $9.95. Designed by Neil A. Rosenberg. One 17" x 22" color map; 100 mounted backprinted cardboard playing pieces; two six-sided dice; one eight-page rule book with accompanying errata sheet. For one to four players. Playing time 45 minutes to an hour. Published 1983.

Silo 14 is a doomsday scenario from Jersey Devil's Centurion line of games and is suited for both solitaire and multi-player gaming. To win, you must maneuver your group of ten Commandos into the core of a missile command center and stop the plans of a berserk general who has set the missile to fire, beginning World War III. In ten turns, the Commandos must start at the upper level of the command center and fight through breaches and past highly skilled Silo Defenders armed with grenades and rifles.

The best thing about ***Silo 14*** is that no two playing sessions are alike. The placement of Silo Defenders is random according to rolls of the dice: It is difficult, if not impossible, to plan a fool-proof strategy. If you are playing with more than one person, you may not fire on each other (unless you are playing the Red Brigade scenario). Since it is never certain where the Silo Defenders will appear at any given time, your Commandos are sometimes easily ganged-up on, depending on die rolls.

The game's weak point is that too much depends on luck. Winning isn't easy and you're lucky to get enough men to the center of the silo to disarm the missile in the allotted time. Each turn takes a considerable amount of time, with players moving their men sequentially, one at a time.

When you manage to beat the odds, ***Silo 14*** has its exciting and gratifying moments, but the game is not for the impatient or the easily discouraged. For those ready for a challenge, however, ***Silo 14*** makes for an amusing hour of game playing.

– Suzanne Stevens

JUDGE DREDD (Games Workshop); $18.00. Designed by Ian Livingstone. Boxed, with 4-page 8½" x 11" rulebook, 17" x 22" mounted playing board, 54 large "Action" cards, 84 smaller cards, 6 pawns, one die, and the "Umpty Candy Card Album," which is not used in the game, but helps to explain background information.

Judge Dredd is a British comic-book hero, whose exploits are only now reaching the United States in reprint form. Dredd is a lawman in the next century. Tough (*very* tough) but fair, he faces a weird assortment of foes –

HOW LONG CAN YOU TREAD HISTORY?

a year...
a decade...
a lifetime... at

The Court of Kings

A PBM game of Medieval Intrigue in which....

* Players steer a family, church or tribe through years of history
* Each game year is a one time event in our chronicles
* The only victory condition is SURVIVAL.

For FREE INFORMATION write to:

THE ROUND TABLE
Box 263
Cornish, Maine 04020

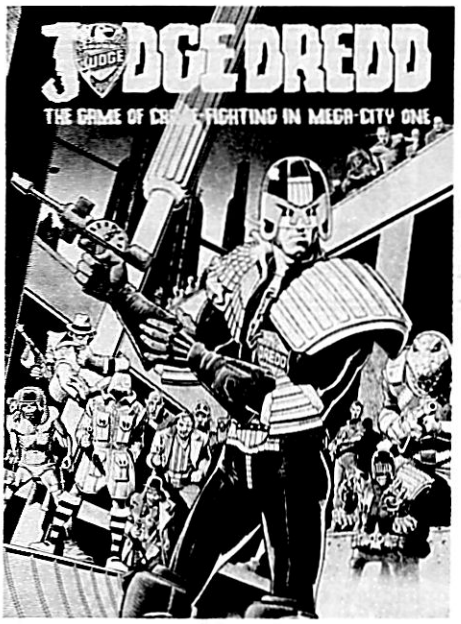
Or send $10.00 for rules, set-up. Please specify Royal, Noble, Church or Tribal.

human, animal and alien – as he enforces the laws of Mega-City One.

This game, needless to say, is an attempt to cash in on the comic's popularity. To Games Workshop's credit, they have done a lavish job of it. The components are well-designed, expensively printed, and stand up well to play. More to the point, the game is totally faithful to the background of the Judge's world – indeed, that's where most of its appeal lies. The Judge Dredd stories are full of strange science-fictional characters, presented in a wry, tongue-in-cheek fashion. The game captures the comics' flavor perfectly, as each player becomes a Judge attempting to arrest a wild variety of foes for crimes ranging from selling old comics to murder.

It's extremely easy to play; the rules are *very* short and simple. Players may interact freely through use of action cards; even if (as often happens) your own character is far from the action, he can play a card to harass another Judge.

However, the game doesn't play much like the stories. The Judges don't cooperate here – it's every man for himself. Dredd himself appears as a *deus ex machina* on a few cards, making your arrests for you (or requisitioning your cycle). Characters never die, but a lost fight can doom a player to a boring few turns until his player gets out of the Emergency Room and back into action. And the game cards, which *are* very witty, provide a disproportionate amount of the game's excitement. Once you've laughed at all the cards, ***Judge Dredd*** resolves itself into two to three hours of moving around the board, rolling dice, and trying to accumulate enough good cards to let you make an arrest despite the worst your fellow Judges can do. If there had been some way for Judges to co-



operate (other than simply giving each other good cards, which is possible but usually pointless) the game would be more meaningful.

On the whole: If you're a Judge Dredd fan, you'll buy it no matter what the reviews say, so be comforted: you *will* like it. In fact, it works both ways; I became a fan *after* reading through the game. If you don't read Judge Dredd, you might still enjoy it as a beer-and-pretzels game (albeit a long one), if you can handle the steep imported price tag.

– *Steve Jackson*

FASA INTRODUCES THE FUTURE

STAR TREK: THE ROLE-PLAYING GAME, BASIC SET. Everything you need to begin playing STAR TREK is included in this exciting game. Play the role of a Federation officer aboard a starship seeking out strange new worlds and civilizations. Only $12.00 for hours of enjoyment.

STAR TREK II: **STARSHIP COMBAT SIMULATOR.** All the rules and playing pieces you need to play four different games of space combat. Included are a role-playing game in which players attempt to save the *Kaobyashi Maru* and three games of starship tactics. Only $12.00.

fasa

The gaming universe of **STAR TREK** is already alive with adventures, rule supplements, data books, and starship miniatures. These new games are compatible with FASA's existing products and are an excellent introduction to gaming in the final frontier.

Available at better hobby, game, toy and book stores.

If ordering by mail include $1.00 for postage and handling.

UFP

FASA Corporation • P.O. Box 6930 • Chicago, Illinois 60680 • (312) 243-5660

Copyright © 1966, 1983 Paramount Pictures Corporation
All rights reserved
STAR TREK is a trademark of Paramount Pictures Corporation

Copyright © 1983 Paramount Pictures Corporation
STAR TREK is a trademark of Paramount Pictures Corporation
STAR TREK II: The Wrath of Khan is a trademark of Paramount Pictures Corporation.

SUPPLEMENTS

ARMADILLO AUTODUEL ARENA (Steve Jackson Games); $3.00. Designed by Steve Jackson. Supplement to ***Car Wars***. Two 32" x 21" mapsheets, two-page instruction sheet, counter sheet with 16 wreck counters, zip-lock bag. Published 1983.

The ***Armadillo Autoduel Arena*** features the first autoduelling arena opened in the U.S. The huge map (32" x 42") shows the arena proper, built around an abandoned shopping mall. Arena offices are situated inside the heavily bunkered mall building, with TV and security bunkers on the roof. Spectator seating is in stands above the wall, with some of the seating actually at ground level. The instruction sheet gives a short history of the mall/arena, complete descriptions of the arena and its outlying structures, a small map of the overall arena, detailed security procedures and, best of all, a weekly schedule detailing events by night and the prizes awarded! The wreck counters are vehicles from the ***Car Wars*** sheet.

The arena schedule is a prize, enlarging on the AADA events described in ***Autoduel Champions***. The arena itself is a good battleground for any autoduelling event, albeit not that dangerous. The counters, by Denis Loubet, are excellent, especially the wrecked Cadillac, which looks like it hit a concrete abutment at 70 mph!

Although a good arena, the map is a bit large; a 3' by 4' table is necessary to mount it properly. Also, the mapsheets are distorted near the middle, where the two halves of the arena come together; you will find that the lines in

the center won't match perfectly. However, as most of the distortion doesn't affect the combat areas much, it shouldn't prove to be much of a problem.

As a whole, the ***Armadillo Autoduel Arena*** is an unusual place to duel, due to interrupted line-of-sight and the necessary gambit of screaming around the central bunker at high speed to see anybody. I find it a welcome break from road duelling. A must for ***Car Wars*** fans. At only $3, it's a bargain!

– Craig Sheeley

KNIGHT HAWKS (TSR); $12.00. Designed by Douglas Niles. Expansion to ***Star Frontiers***. One 8½" x 11" 64-page boardgame rules book, 16-page adventure module, 22½" x 35" full-color map, 285 color counters, two ten-sided dice, boxed. Published 1983.

Spaceships and stellar warfare have finally come to TSR's ***Star Frontiers*** universe. The obvious lack of such rules in the original set has been filled in quite thoroughly by this two-part expansion set. The first part is a military boardgame pitting United Planetary Federation's destroyers, assault scouts, fighters, light cruisers, assault carriers, battleships, minelayers and space stations against like units of the Sathar (a nasty alien race) and pirates. There are two basic and two advanced scenarios, as well as a space fleet campaign in the Campaign Book.

The Campaign rulebook has guides for player character interaction with the spaceships. There are sections dealing with spaceship construction (hull size, equipment, weapons, and details on modifications and maintenance), spaceship skills for the characters (including equipment and what happens to your character when his ship is shredded) and some added rules on economics (handling mining operations and freight lines). The book closes with campaign notes for the referee and background notes.

As with the first ***Star Frontiers*** boxed set, the graphics and colors on the maps are nice (the battle hexgrid has a map of a space station deck and assault scout plans on the back). For your $12.00 you get quite a lot of material, including an adventure module titled "Warriors of White Light" which combines ship combat and role-playing, and can be used as a basis for further adventures.

The boardgame is simple and fast. Even the Advanced Game is easy to learn, and players can get right to the fun. It isn't as detailed as Yaquinto's ***Shooting Star*** space combat game, but the simpler design concept of ***Star Frontiers*** warrants a simpler game. The Campaign Book has enough skills to make your character spaceworthy and equipment to keep him alive once he gets there.

A few problems do exist, one being that this game has little or no cross-over value for other space RPGs – there's nothing really new. The

Explore unknown realms with TAKAMO, a new strategic-level play-by-mail game.

It's a computer-moderated game with programs supporting player diplomacy.

It's exciting. Fast Paced. Galactic civilizations clash for survival.

Pick one of nine player types. Build a vast war fleet and conquer the galaxy.

Send $10.00 for a planetary set-up, a free rulebook and two free ten-action turns.

Additional ten-action turns are $2.00. Extra actions are 20 cents each.

Advent Games

Post Office Box 81674, Lincoln, NE 68501

ARGONAUT GAMES
P.O. Box 438
HASLETT, MI 48840

DISCOUNT PRICES — 40% or more off retail.
SPECIALS: Metagaming's *Starleader: Assault* @ $2.00 & GDW's *Invasion: Earth* or *Triplanetary* @ $6.00.

HERE ARE MORE OF OUR LATEST OFFERINGS

		RETAIL PRICE	NET
TSR	Star Frontiers GM Screen	5.50	3.30
TSR	SF1 Module "Volturnus"	5.50	3.30
TSR	SF2 Module "Star Spawn"	5.50	3.30
GDW	Best of Trav.Journal—Vol.2	5.00	3.00
GDW	Traveller Book 0	6.00	3.60
FASA	Rescue on Galetea	6.00	3.60
FASA	Trail of the Sky Raiders	6.00	3.60
Phoenix	Alien Wargamer Contacts	22.00	13.20
Metagaming	Helltanks	5.00	3.00
Metagaming	Helltanks Destroyers	5.00	3.00
Task Force	Battle Damage: Code Red	5.00	3.00
Task Force	Nexus #2	2.50	1.50
Task Force	All Pocket Games	40% off	
	--- MINIATURES ---		
RAFM	Traveller Miniatures—per set	6.00	3.60
Ral Partha	15mm Laser Burns	40% off	
Starline	Romulan Condor	5.50	3.30
2200 for	Gorn Destroyer	4.00	2.40
StarFleet	Lyran Cruiser	4.00	2.40
Battles	Hydran Lancer	4.00	2.40

Certified checks/m.o. prepaid orders and cash COD's shipped at once. UPS and handling: add $2 or 10% (whichever is greater). In Michigan, add 4% tax.

Quantities are limited. Order items above or send business-size SASE (with 37¢ postage) for complete listing of items available.

SPECIAL OFFER: Send $2.00 postage and handling and get our complete sales listing along with a free velveteen dice pouch.

background has the simplistic Good (us) vs. Evil (them) and the Sathar ships look like Buck Rogers throw-aways. Spaceship construction is slightly more restrictive than in other games, and new skills make characters created without this supplement less useful. Economics needs still more work.

Knight Hawks is a needed role-playing supplement and a decent space boardgame. It isn't worth the money if you just want the boardgame ($6.00 would be right), but if you play *Star Frontiers*, this set is a good bargain that will expands your game tremendously.

– Mark Pokrzywnicki

PLAY AIDS

MSPE CHARACTER FOLDERS (Blade/Flying Buffalo); $3.95. No design credits. Play-aid for *Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes*. Contains 20 character folders, within a cover. Published 1983.

Something new! These 8½" x 11" character sheets not only hold *every* piece of data you might need to know about your spy or mercenary, but they fold up to form an 8½" x 3¾" wallet for holding notes and clues! There are also 24 character sketches on the inside of the cover, which can be used as character portraits.

I'm not usually one to go gaga about character sheets, but these are good – they give you somewhere to put things *and* fold down to a convenient size. I don't care for the character sketches, though . . . this isn't Liz Danforth at her best.

If you play *MSPE*, buy these. They're worth the money.

– W.G. Armintrout

COMPUTER GAMES

VOYAGER I (Avalon Hill/Microcomputer Games); $20–$25. Designed by William Volk. 32K cassette for Apple II+ and Pet; 16K cassette for TRS-80 Color and models I & III; 24K cassette for Atari 400/800; disk version for 48K Apple II+, IBM PC, and 32K Atari 400/800. Published 1981.

Voyager I is a real-time science fiction adventure. Your mission – to stop a kamikaze alien ship bent on the destruction of Earth – can be accomplished by destroying all of the ship's generators or by killing all of its attendant robots. If you destroy all of the generators, the ship goes into a self-destruct mode, leaving you with 60 seconds to find a shuttle and escape.

The to-the-shuttle dash is exciting and challenging. The graphics are fair and at least give a three-dimensional feel. The map that the computer keeps, which is continuously updated as you explore the ship's four levels, is also a good feature.

Overall, however, the game is slow-moving and rather boring. Combat is simple; when you enter a room containing a robot, the robot gets a free shot and then a two-way shootout begins. This continues until one of you runs out of energy. Arcade feel and action is non-existent. Some robots last for only two or three hits, but most can survive many more. It is unlikely that you will outlast one of the "superbots," even if you rest to restore your energy just before entering the room. The rest of the ship is nondescript; all rooms and hallways are the same and some contain generators, shuttles or another

Approved For Use With TRAVELLER®

High Adventure

Introduce your players to **The Mountain Environment** in this **Traveller®** supplement dealing with travel and survival in high altitudes, including rules for mountaineering, descriptions of gear and equipment, and guidelines for setting up special events, encounters, and adventures in mountainous terrain. Then challenge their skills and ingenuity with **Ascent to Anekthor,** as they join a wealthy daredevil in a bold (and perhaps foolhardy) attempt on the highest peak on the planet.

Explore the oceans in **The Undersea Environment;** rules, equipment, encounters and events for use in underwater adventuring. Then join **The Drenslaar Quest,** a race to salvage the cargo of a sunken star freighter.

High Adventure for **Traveller®** from:

Gamelords, Ltd.

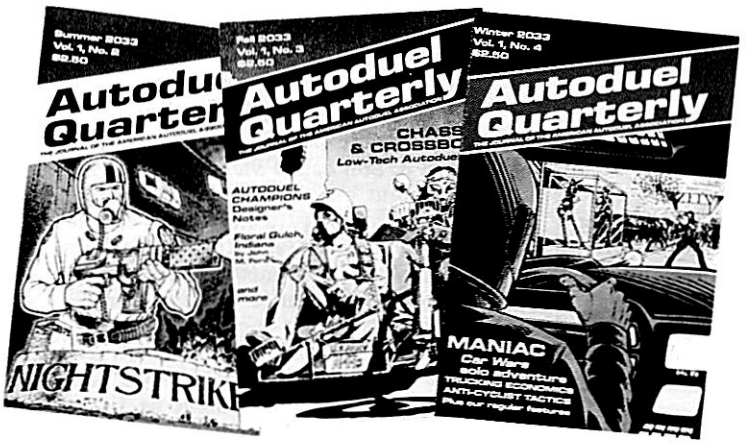
18616 Grosbeak Terrace, Gaithersburg, MD 20879

laser rifle. *Voyager I* quickly becomes predictable.

– Bruce Berrien

PERIODICALS

AUTODUEL QUARTERLY (Steve Jackson Games); $2.50. Published quarterly, edited by Scott Haring. One 8½" x 5½", 40-page magazine. First issue published Spring 1983 (dated Spring 2033).



Autoduel Quarterly, "The Journal of the American Autoduel Association," is a magazine devoted to supplementary material for the game *Car Wars*. This gives it a sense of direction rare in new magazines, because the reader knows exactly what type of articles to expect . . . and expectations are completely fulfilled.

A sample issue contained episodes in the future-history mythos, new character creation rules, new vehicles and gadgets, answers to queries from players concerning specific rules interpretations, and an adventure scenario for a referee and 1-8 players.

The rules supplements are as entertaining as they are informative: I honestly had to look twice to distinguish a real advertisement from an "ad" which presented new vehicle equipment. The "North American Road Atlas and Survival Guide, 3rd Edition," creates a feeling of continuity and involvement with the *Car Wars* world, developing the game as a role-playing experience as well as a set of battle rules.

Autoduel Quarterly has absolutely no gaming value to anyone except a *Car Wars* buff. Moreover, nothing in it is essential for playing or enjoying the game. However, everything in it is useful for a *Car Wars* campaign and unless you bought the magazine thinking it was something else, you'll be more than satisfied with it. How good is *Autoduel Quarterly*? Well, I'm not running a *Car Wars* campaign right now and I loved it – and I'll buy the next issue.

– Ronald Pehr

Feudal Lords

The first pbm game of economic development, military conquest, and medieval intrigue

FEUDAL LORDS is a computer-moderated correspondence game in which up to 15 players vie to become King of Arthurian England.

You, as head of a fiefdom, have 30 types of military, economic, and diplomatic orders available.

– You provide for your knights, townspeople and peasants.

– You may make an assortment of investments to build your economic and military base.

– You can acquire vassals and influence through force or diplomacy

– You can spy on other fiefdoms.

CAN YOU BECOME THE NEXT KING?

GRAAF SIMULATIONS
27530 Harper
St. Clair Shores, MI
48081

ENTRY: $10.00 for the rulebook, set-up, and first three turns; $2.50 per turn.
RULEBOOK only: $2.50

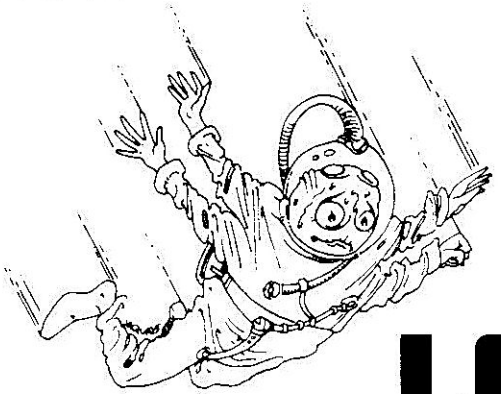
Quest of the Great Jewels

The third War of the Great Jewels is over, having ended with the intervention of the Powers-That-Be, but not before most of Zorplia was laid waste and the greater part of its inhabitants destroyed. The Powers-That-Be have sealed the Great Jewels (talismans of immense power) and many of the lesser talismans in the Forbidden Cities and set enchanted armies to guard them. Only scattered remnants of the four peoples remain. Dragons and other terrors roam the land. Can you marshall your forces and come forth to be the sole ruler of Zorplia?

Quest of the Great Jewels is our newest computer moderated play-by-mail fantasy wargame. You assume the role of one of 4 types of being: the Azoni – builders of great citadels; the Rilris – hoarders of wealth and magical talismans; the Quntag – former emperors of Zorplia's vast provinces; and the Slenth – destroyers and ravagers of the land.

Turn fees are $2.50 initially and increase to a maximum of $3.50 in later turns (after turn 20). Please send for our rules book ($2.50) before entering.

Zorph Enterprises
3646 Gibsonia Rd.
Gibsonia, PA 15044



Letters

The *Fringeworthy/FTL: 2448* review was long but good. It's a shame that good games like these get ignored due to the saturation of the market by older games systems. *SG* can help by publishing generic adventures instead of dedicated ones. Perhaps it's time you get Mr. Barton to write some sort of guidelines for a "universal" SF-RPG system. Not full-fledged rules for converting characters and weapons from one system to another, but a writer's/player's guide to using *Space Gamer*-brand adventures. The naturalistic system used in ***Space Opera*** would be the best for describing worlds since it would allow GMs to easily adapt worlds to any existing system. NPCs could be rated using a system like that used in ***The Haunting of Harkwood*** (*TSG* 63). The guidelines could be published first in *SG* and perhaps as a hand-out sheet to be sent to authors interested in writing for *SG/FG*. (A similar set of guidelines for fantasy games would be nice, too. And don't forget superheroes!)

Stefan Jones
Locust Valley, NY

Funny you should mention that: Aaron Allston has been commissioned to do such an article. (Look for it in 68 or 69.) I guess great minds work in like ways.

–CF

I just received my *SG* 65, as the first of my resubscription. I'm not really sure if I like the split, but since I read almost exclusively the material you now cover anyway, I figure what the hell, let you guys have some fun and specialize.

My article-by-article opinion of *SG* 65:

Cover Art – I loved it! That man has talent.

"Superheroes in *TFT*" – not bad at all! I really liked the new stuff here. Looks good.

FTL: 2448/Fringeworthy Review – Well, I like reviews and this one didn't change my opinion. Now I have another company to add to my people-to-look-out-for list.

FTL/Fringeworthy Designer's Notes – I like DNs too and the info on upcoming Tri-Tac publications was interesting.

"The Joystick Report" – No offense to all your video addict fans, but I doubt if most of us *care* that much about a joystick.

"So You Wanna Be A ***Starmaster***" – Looked nice. You need more of this sort of article.

"Fleet Tactics in ***Star Fleet Battles***" – I don't particularly care for the game, but the tactics were sound and the technique kept it moving. Good job, Walt.

Revised ***Champions*** Review – In all fairness, I really can't see the need for a review of a product that only corrected a few minor omissions. I certainly wouldn't spend $15 for anything but a whole new game.

Columns, etc. – For the life of me I can't think of any mag with as good a column section as you Texas lunatics.

Scanner – Excellent, as always.

The magazine "As A Whole" – On a scale of 1 to 10 you get a 9.5 this time. Keep those ads coming in! They're almost as interesting as articles! But I do think you should require Schubel & Son to tell about their hidden costs on their ads! I was thinking about joining the game, but with all the extra fee tacking-on I've changed my mind!

Keep One Thing In Mind – You are better than *Pegasus*. You are better than *Dragon*. You are better than *Ares* used to be. You are better than the *Journal of the Traveller's Aid Society*. You are *not* better than sex or cheesecake with cherries. Oh well, no one's perfect.

Robert Hayes
Layton, UT

Thanks for the in-depth analysis; I appreciate the criticism as much as I do the compliments. I hope you're showing SG to your friends – we can always use another reader.

As for Schubel & Son, I'd like to hear from some of their customers (and potential customers) about PBM games and fees. I'm sure the next letter will draw a few responses, too; not to mention "A Gentle Art: Human-Moderated PBMs" on page 43.

–CF

I have just finished reading the article in the May-June issue (63) called "Star Mail: Three New PBM Space Games," by W.G. Armintrout. I was a little taken aback by this review in that in the past your reviews have been factual and to the point, but in this case I feel someone missed the boat by about a mile! The two new games reviewed that are moderated by Flying Buffalo are for the most part new or at least new to the American market. I have no complaint about them or the review up to that point.

However, Mr. Armintrout then goes into a long dissertation on the game by Schubel & Son called ***Star Venture***. First, I must point out to all your readers that ***Star Venture*** is *not* a new game but has been around since May of 1982. Secondly, nothing was mentioned in the review about the play balance of ***Star Venture***. As I sit here with a copy of the rules in hand, I can only conclude that there is no balance in the game since a player is allowed to buy as many ships as he/she wants to. The obvious problem is that wealthy players can buy their way to power very easily this way.

Finally, I think Mr. Armintrout's comment that "a more competitive and cunning collection of players would be hard to find" is ludicrous at best. Most of the really good players that I know of have left ***Tribes of Crane*** and are playing in Adventures By Mail's ***Beyond The Stellar Empire***. Your readers have also told you this in the last game survey because ***Star Venture*** was rated as a 4.39 and ***Beyond The Stellar Empire*** was rated as a 5.96.

In closing, I would like to say that part of Mr. Armintrout's problem is a lack of education and experience in playing a good quality play-by-mail game. To help remedy this, I will buy Mr. Armintrout a set-up in ***Beyond The Stellar Empire***, the most detailed, exciting and competitive play-by-mail game, so he can find out for himself what a true quality game is. All you or he needs to do is send me his address.

Douglas Bagwell
Shreveport, LA

Congrats to all the staff down at *TSG* for the Origins Award for Best Magazine covering Role Playing. It was well deserved. Ditto Steve's induction into the Gaming Hall of Fame. Makes me even more proud than ever to be associated with the magazine in some small way.

I would like to take the opportunity to comment on Russell Grant Collins' criticism in *TSG* 64 (Letters) on my ***V&V*** review. I'm afraid your analogy is a bit off, Russell. While Stan Lee may have chosen the powers of the Fantastic Four

et al, I hardly think he's ever donned the identity of Mr. Fantastic or The Thing and gone a-crime fighting, as the players of any superhero role-playing game do – if they're truly role playing. So his creation of their powers isn't really the same as a player creating powers for a hero he's to "become," even if only for a little while in a game scenario. No, to carry your analogy to its logical conclusion, the *gamemaster*, not the player, would have to choose the superhero's powers for his scenario, as his role in a role-playing situation is closer to Stan Lee's and those who write and create comics than a player portraying a hero would be.

And as for the trimming rule in *V&V*, no one's making you use it, you know. As with any RPG, all you have to do is to ignore those rules you don't like (as I do with the "hero being the player with the addition of powers" rule) and use the rest. Now if you simply *prefer Champions* and want to play it instead of *V&V*, you certainly don't need any other excuse, do you? If you enjoy *Champions*, by all means, stick with it! However, if you do like superhero games where you create your own hero rather than doing it randomly, I recommend Chaosium's new *Superworld* to you.

Personally, I find it much easier to create *Superworld* superheroes who are just as satisfying as those possible with *Champions*, and find the game somewhat more playable as well. Of course, that's not to say *Superworld* is necessarily a *better* game than *Champions*, just that I find it so for my purposes, as I do *V&V* from time to time. But if you prefer *Champions* (as I know many, including Aaron, do), more power (no pun intended) to you! Diversity among gamers is hardly a bad thing.

On another subject, I'm afraid that for the first time I can remember, I must take issue with Steve on something, namely his recommendation a few issues back of Dana Lombardy's gaming columns in *Analog* and *Asimov's* SF magazines. When I first heard about them, I, too, was glad to learn that the hobby was getting more coverage in the general SF press (especially since I'd written to them about running more gaming articles following one by John Ford a year or so back and was informed they weren't interested in any future coverage of SF gaming). I was sorry I'd missed the first few columns. Then I began reading Lombardy's pieces and was rather disappointed, since there was little of any depth to them and, even worse, little that seemed designed to spur much interest in anyone outside the field.

The coverage of *Traveller*, for instance, read like a press release. None of the aspects of the game that might intrigue a general SF fan, such as the game's roots in the works of many popular SF authors, were even touched upon. As much could be learned from reading the game box cover. And then I was appalled at Lombardy's review of my current favorite, *Call of Cthulhu*. He actually claimed that there was no magic in the game that players could use! Even a cursory reading of the rules would reveal an entire *chapter* on the spells of the Cthulhu mythos, all of which are available to player characters once they find and learn them from the *Necronomicon*, etc.

As a reviewer myself, I know it's possible to make mistakes, but it's hard to justify such inaccurate reporting as evidenced in Lombardy's *CoC* column. I doubt if many Lovecraft fans would be overly drawn to the monster-shoot-'em-up his description of *CoC* turned it into. No, rather than writing the magazines thanking them for Dana Lombardy's columns, I intend to write asking them to either replace him or get someone to check his submissions for accuracy – or else withdraw them altogether. And I urge other gamers who wish to see our hobby accurately represented to the general SF audience to do the same. Much as I'd like to see SF gaming receive the coverage it deserves, I'd rather our hobby be ignored than misrepresented.

William A. Barton
Indiannapolis, IN

HERO GAMES PRESENTS

ADVENTURERS CLUB

THE HERO GAMES QUARTERLY MAGAZINE – AND NOW A *CLUB*, TOO!

Do you play Champions? Espionage? Justice, Inc.? Well, we've got just the thing for you. The *Adventurers Club* magazine is a house organ dedicated to Hero Games and Hero-related products – including Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes, Autoduel Champions, and the soon-to-be-released SuperWorld adventure with Champions stats. Each issue of *Adventurers Club* contains a complete adventure as well as articles covering rules expansions and clarifications. The *Adventurers Club* magazine is quarterly now – and a subscription is only $10.00.

True Hero Games fanatics who subscribe to the *Adventurers Club* magazine will also want to join the Adventurers Club itself! Membership in the club is an additional $10.00 – and includes:

– *A personalized membership card* good for discounts on Hero Games products purchased at conventions!

– *A newsletter* of direct interest to the Hero System, keeping you informed of events and gaming groups!

– *Free products* as special gifts from us!

– *Wonder Bucks*, coupons good for cash off selected Hero games products and services when obtained from Hero Games!

Subscribe and join today!

HERO GAMES 92-A 21st Avenue San Mateo, CA 94402

Where We're Going
by Steve Jackson

Lots of assorted bits and pieces this month. As you see, the magazine is not yet back on schedule – but it's getting closer. We're going to take the next few months for "housekeeping" tasks of one sort and another: getting totally caught up on magazine schedules, building some new office space, installing a better phone system, working on *GURPS* . . . What's *GURPS*? Read on.

Anyway, there won't be any *big* new releases until about Origins time. We'll still be here, though, hard at work. If you can call playing games "work."

Small New Releases

Car Wars Expansions 3 and 4 are (finally) out. Each one sells for $3 and includes two 21" x 32" maps, an 8" x 14" rule sheet, and an assortment of color counters. If you are into *Car Wars*, you want these. Otherwise, you don't. Fair enough? There will be a few more *Car Wars* items before Origins, but I'm not sure what they'll be.

Computer Progress

Origin Software Systems is still working on its first SJ Games releases. Andy Greenberg, who programmed *Wizardry*, is doing *Ogre*. The notorious Lord British himself (*Akalabeth, Ultima, Ultima II*, etc.) is doing *Car Wars. Undead* is stalled as I write this – they lost their programmer – but ought to be back on the track soon.

And play-by-mail versions of two of our games are now running. Prometheus Games, a new Austin company, is already running *Autoduel PBM*, a *Car Wars* arena game. And Draper Kauffman, who helped me out on *Fantasy Trip* economics back in the Dark Ages, is now in the playtest stage of a computer-moderated *Illuminati* that will have 24 players in each game. I'll have more data on that as it develops – or just watch for the ads . . .

Over the Water

Games Workshop in England tells us that *Car Wars* is now the best-selling imported game over there. At their yearly Games Day, it was rated third as "Best SF Boardgame" and fifth as "Best New Game" (in spite of being two years old). *Illuminati* came in second in that category, and third in "Best Abstract Game." Yours truly scored second as "Best Games Inventor," behind Mr. Gygax, who has quite a following in England.

The Case of the Two Steve Jacksons continues to get thicker, too. For those of you who didn't know: Games Workshop is England's biggest adventure game company. One of the head honchos there is named – you guessed it – Steve Jackson. For years, he's been fielding questions from people who think he designed *Car Wars, Ogre*, etc. Now he's getting even. The British SJ has authored a series of solo adventures, called "Fighting Fantasy Gamebooks," which are now being published in the US. And people think *I* did those. Ah, well. Perhaps one of us should change his name to something uncommon, like Gygax or Zocchi, to avoid confusion.

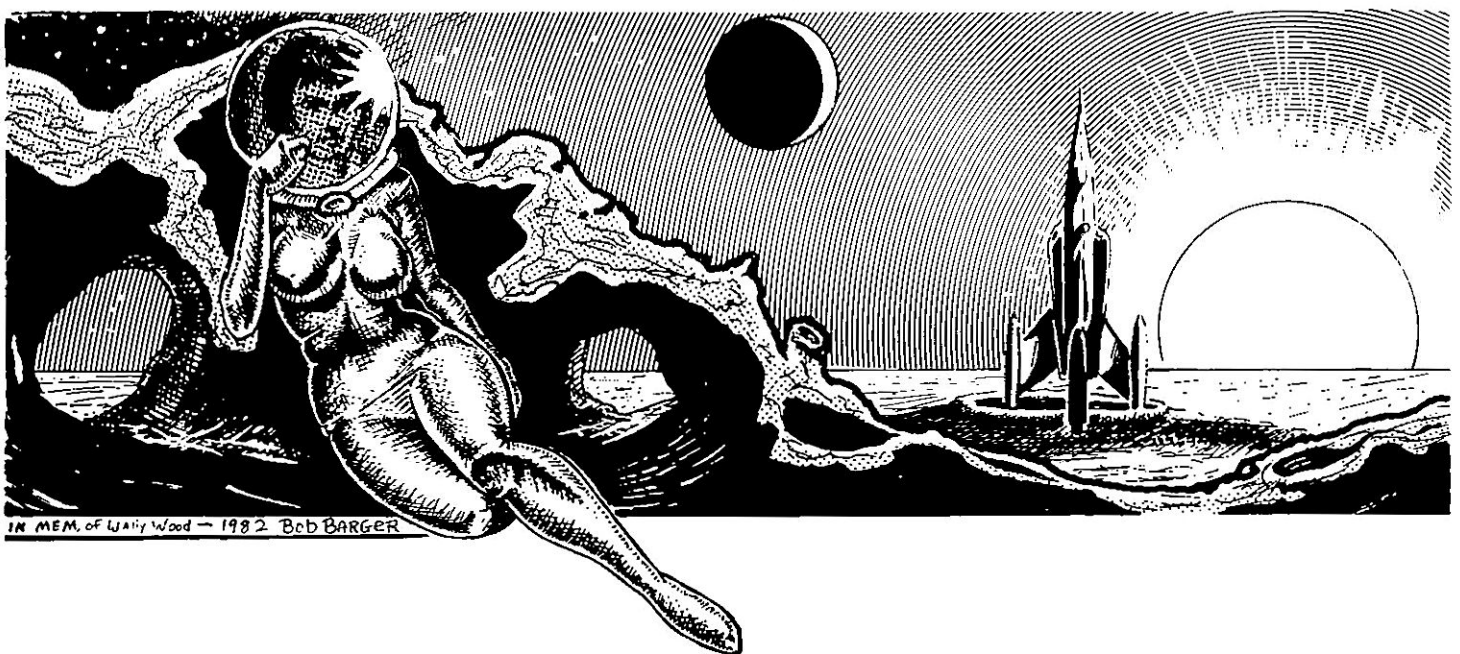
Personal Appearances

In mid-November, I went up to Mile High Comics in Denver . . . met a lot of people, refereed a *Car Wars* arena, played some challenge games of *Ogre* (and got beaten once!) and had a generally good time. A week after I got back home, Denver got several feet of snow. Good timing.

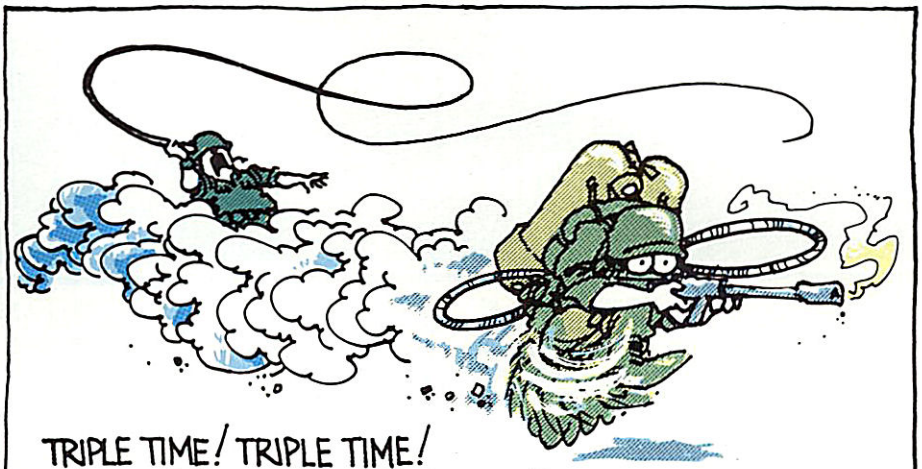
I'm confirmed as Gaming GoH for CoastCon (Biloxi, MS, March 9-11), and *almost* confirmed as GGoH for Earthcon IV (Cleveland, OH, September 7-9) . . . just a few details left to work out. I'll also be at Origins in Dallas this July, and at most of the Texas conventions. See you at one or another of them, I hope.

GURPS

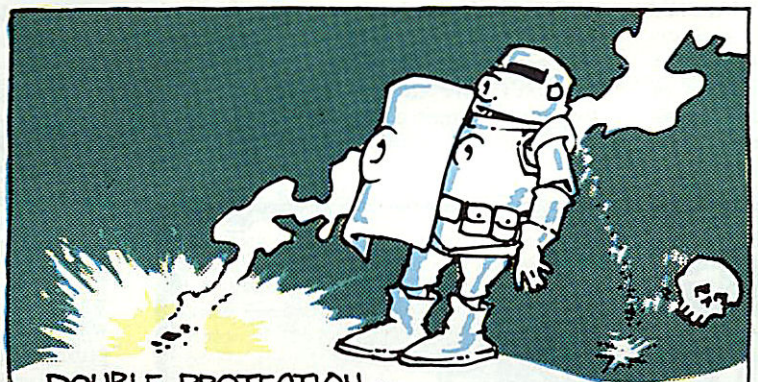
Stands for the Great Unnamed Role-Playing System, now in actual playtesting. At the moment, we're running an "after the world ends" scenario, set in the Texas hill country many years after a society-wrecking plague. That way, we can get a good check on the game mechanics *without* complexities like magic or high technology. So far, it works. **SG**



MURPHY'S RULES



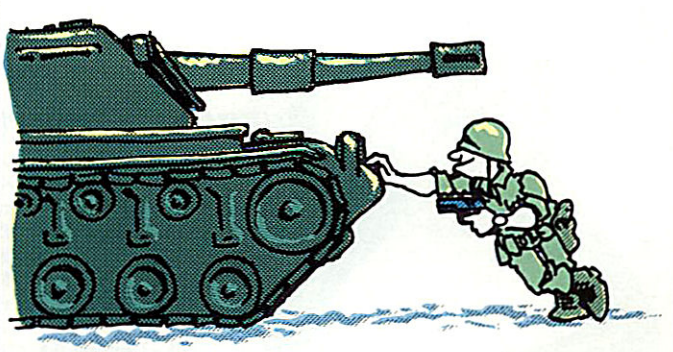
TRIPLE TIME! TRIPLE TIME!
In Avalon Hill's SQUAD LEADER, an infantryman carrying a flamethrower can run at 25 mph along a road, providing a sergeant or other leader is encouraging him... (...Karl Dishaw)



DOUBLE PROTECTION...
In TSR's GAMMA WORLD, an Energy Grenade does half damage if you use a shield *or* wear armor, but does full damage if you wear both...
(Jim & Ed Simons)

BUTTERFINGERS!
In Hero Games' CHAMPIONS, the probability of an average person being able to grab something off a table (such as a soft-drink bottle) is 25 per cent...
(~Mary & Sam Bourne, Ross Nordeen)

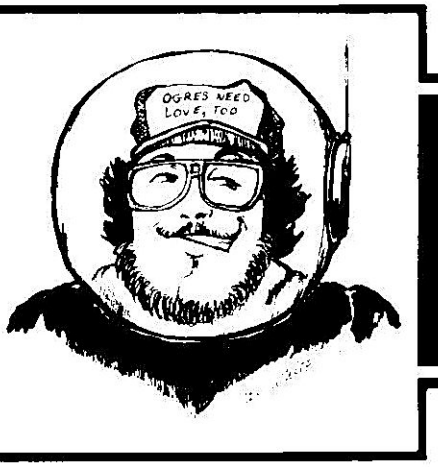
WHOA, THERE!
In Yaquinto's BEACHHEAD, infantry units using nothing more than small arms can pin a tank, preventing it from moving or firing for a turn...



...BEN SARGENT...

Counter Intelligence

by Chris Frink



I expect all of you are surprised to find *SG* 67 popping up so soon after 66 arrived. Sorry if we caused any confusion; we're trying to catch up. Just to show you we're not out to drive you crazy with this herky-jerky publishing schedule, *SG* 68 will be out *two* months after 67. Just like it's supposed to be.

Help! Help!

Here at SJ Games we're proud of our last game-in-a-magazine – ***Orbit War***. We are not proud about the time it took to get it to you. We had to call *OW* out of the bullpen after our starter gave up in the late innings. We were lucky ***Orbit War*** was submitted in close-to-publishable form. The little work it needed took more time than our schedule allowed – goodbye deadlines. But it was the only complete SF game we had on hand. And when an opportunity to purchase ***Shuttle-wars*** from the defunct Paranoia Press came up in the midst of producing ***Orbit War***, Steve scarfed it up as a companion piece for ***Orbit War***.

When we split *TSG* into *FG* and *SG*, we promised you two games a year in each magazine. We have to meet some pretty tough standards – yours. We aren't getting enough serious game submissions that meet those standards. In other words, we don't have enough resources to print two *good* games a year in *Space Gamer*. We would like to continue publishing games in the magazine; but, instead of promising a specific number every year, we would like to publish any good material we get in. We'll keep trying to give you two good games a year. If not two, we'll try for one. If we can't get even one good one, we won't print a bad one – we'll just run scenarios instead.

One of SPI's fatal mistakes was its commitment to a game in *every* issue of *S&T* and *Ares*. We don't want to risk that. How will you feel if we ease up the game-in-the-magazine schedule? Let us know.

And we *do* want to see your game designs. Just remember that the more thoroughly prepared submissions are going to get the most consideration. They should be well playtested, have legible, organized rules, and a good map and counters. If we get in two good game designs a year, we'll print 'em. But until then, we don't want to be scrambling around trying to publish just-suitable games. We would rather spend the time developing generic game scenarios – *SG* will publish one every issue we don't have a game.

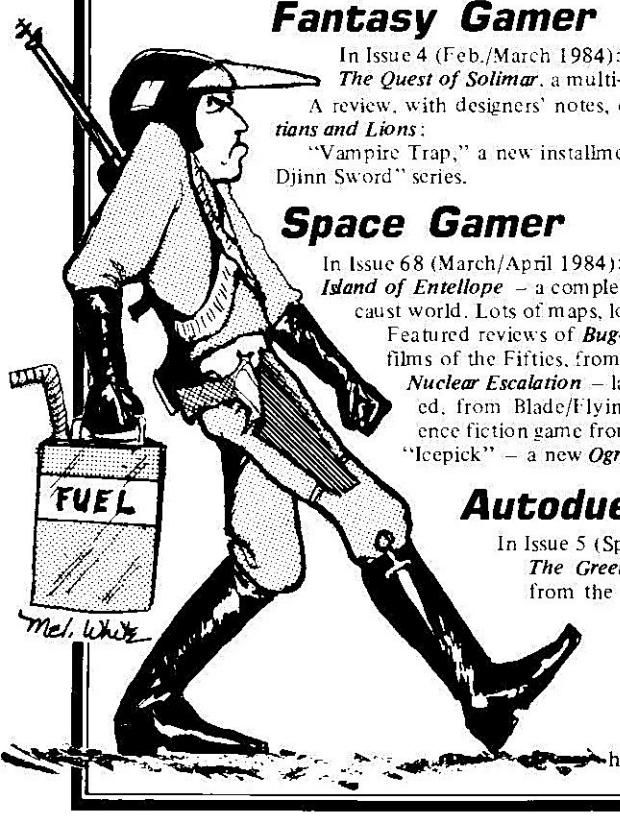
Here comes the plea for help. We need more SF scenarios. And they need to be generic – scenarios that can be played using *any* relevant game systems. As with games, the better-playtested, more-thought-out the adventure, the more consideration it will get. And since *SG* publishes only generic scenarios, the less work we have to do to make them generic, the more inclined we will be to accept them. This shortage is much more pressing than the game shortage, so help me out.

New Regular Feature

This issue sees the debut of a new regular feature, a forum for Play-By-Mail Gaming called "Keeping Posted." "KP" will have room for reviews, designer's notes, gamer's comments, and PBM Update. The column's first article, "A Gentle Art: Human-Moderated PBMs" is controversial and sure to elicit a few responses. I already have a strategy article on line for 68 and a review for 69 to accompany all the commentary.

Play by Mail is becoming a more popular form of gaming, and we will cover all the growth and change in "KP." Watch for it. **SG**

COMING ATTRACTIONS



Fantasy Gamer

In Issue 4 (Feb./March 1984):

The Quest of Solimar, a multi-player fantasy adventure;

A review, with designers' notes, of an irreverent new boardgame, ***Christians and Lions***;

"Vampire Trap," a new installment in Timothy Zahn's "Whehalken the Djinn Sword" series.

Space Gamer

In Issue 68 (March/April 1984):

Island of Entellope – a complete generic adventure set in a post-holocaust world. Lots of maps, lots of details, lots of fun;

Featured reviews of ***Bug-Eyed Monsters*** – the spirit of the SF films of the Fifties, from Greg Costikyan and West End Games; ***Nuclear Escalation*** – latest nuclear tensions gleefully exploited, from Blade/Flying Buffalo; and ***Alien Contact*** – a science fiction game from Phoenix Enterprises;

"Icepick" – a new ***Ogre*** scenario and a new ***Ogre*** short story.

Autoduel Quarterly

In Issue 5 (Spring 2034):

The Green Circle Blues – can you save Seattle from the terrorists? A programmed solo adventure for ***Car Wars***;

"Effie" – life can get complicated in 2034, when you have to make housecalls. Action-packed autoduelling fiction;

The AADA: Here and Now – It's here! It's real! You *can* join!

SCANNER

News from the World of SF Gaming

January/February 1984 Edition

Explosive Expansion at Genesis Games

In the last few months, Genesis Gaming Products of Dallas has acquired the rights to the entire line of Heritage/Dwarfstar games, the old Heritage *Champions* lead-figure line, and Task Force Games' *Swordplay* miniatures. In addition, the company has purchased *Interplay* magazine from the now-defunct Metagaming, Inc. and the entire inventory of Longhorn Game Distributors.

Genesis plans to begin re-releasing the Dwarfstar games early in 1984. The first round of releases will consist of two solo games – ***Barbarian Prince*** and ***Star Smuggler*** – as well as two multi-player games – ***Dragon Rage*** and ***Grav Armor***. A second set of games will be ready in time for the February HIA convention.

The second set will include two never-before-released solo games – ***Cleric*** and ***Galactic Bounty Hunter***. The games will retail for $5.99 and the packaging will be similar to the old Dwarfstar line (though with a new logo, of course).

Although an exact purchase price for the line was not disclosed, Ernie Simpson, Vice-President of Marketing and Product Acquisition for Genesis, said Heritage/Dwarfstar's asking price was $50,000 and that Genesis did *not* pay that much.

Other upcoming releases from Genesis include ***Goblin***, ***Star Viking***, and ***Demon Lord*** from the old Heritage/Dwarfstar line, and new games ***Thief*** and a *Raiders of the Lost Ark*-type game entitled ***Dallas McQuade, Soldier of Fortune***.

Also ready for release at the HIA convention will be two lines of miniatures. Heritage's old ***Champions*** line will debut under a new name, and with a few new figures. (Adding to the confusion, Grenadier, which now owns the miniatures rights to the ***Champions*** name, will release a line of ***Champions*** miniatures at HIA.) Genesis will also have Task Force Games' *Swordplay* miniatures at HIA.

Genesis will also begin publishing *Interplay* magazine. The old Metagaming digest-size in-house organ will, reportedly, be completely revamped. Word is it will be a full-size, glossy paper, full-color gaming magazine.

Greg Stockum, President of World Wide Wargamers – the holding company for Genesis Gaming Products – reports that the company is expanding so quickly it's making everyone involved dizzy. But, he says, the company "plans to be around for a while."

New & Upcoming Releases

Two PBM Magazines Begin Publication

Two new PBM gaming magazines, *Flagship* and *PBM Universal*, began publication in December, 1983.

Flagship will be devoted to a wide range of PBM subjects including reviews, features, designer interviews, company announcements, game-related fiction and an overview of addresses and prices. Edited by *Fire & Movement* Contributing Editor Nicky Palmer, *Flagship* is available in the U.S. for $11 annually (four issues) through Flying Buffalo, Inc., P.O. Box 1467, Scotsdale, AZ 85252-1467. Orders outside the U.S. can be placed directly with the magazine for £6 annually at *Flagship*, P.O. Box 714, Coleshill, Birmingham U.K.

PBM Universal, edited by Bob McLain, was released almost simultaneously with *Flagship*. The magazine, which will be published bi-monthly, will include articles on PBM games and related topics, a game advice column, a regular PBM comic strip and a game design column. Subscriptions are $15 per year (fully refundable if not satisfied) and are available by writing *PBM Universal*, P.O. Box 437, Hawley, PA 18428.

Palmer feels that his *Flagship* and *PBM Universal* are strictly friendly rivals and he encourages contributors to write and illustrate for both magazines.

GDW Announces New Releases

Game Designers' Workshop has announced its new game and supplements releases for the first half of 1984. The list includes: ***Campaign Trail, The Game of Presidential Elections*** ($15); ***The Normandy Campaign, Beachhead to Breakout*** ($10), which pits an Allied player against a German player in a battle for possession of Normandy; ***The Traveller Adventure*** ($12), the second full-length ***Traveller*** book; ***Scouts, Traveller Book 6*** ($6), which presents complete data on the Scout Service of ***Traveller; Safari Ship, Traveller Adventure 10*** ($5), which covers the voyages of the safari ship, *Leaping Snowcat; Murder at Arcturus Station, Traveller Adventure 11* ($5), which involves the murder of Ringiil and the search for his killer; ***Third World War, Battles in Central Europe*** ($20); ***8th Army, The Crusader Battles*** ($10), which follows the Allied offensive in 1941 to relieve Tobruk; and Issue 18 of *The Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society*.

Advent Games Releases New PBM

Advent Games has released ***Takamo***, a strategic-level, science-fiction PBM game of galactic exploration, expansion and conquest. Set-up fee is $10 and provides players with detailed home world, home system, subsector and sector data, as well as two free turns (20 actions) and a free expandable rulebook. A 10-action minimum turn costs $2; additional actions beyond the 10-action minimum will cost 20 cents. Those interested should write ***Takamo***, Advent Games, P.O. Box 81674, Lincoln, NE 68501.

Car Wars **PBM Game Released**

Prometheus Games has acquired the rights from Steve Jackson Games to run a PBM game based on the ***Car Wars*** system. The game, ***Auto-duel***, will pit players against each other in the Titan Duelling Emporium. Players begin in an amateur night competition and work their way up in skill, prestige and money by defeating other players of roughly equal skill. Duel winners will get their next turn free and the most prestigious players will get all their turns free. The $5 set-up fee includes the first turn; turn fees range from $1.75 to $2, depending on the player's skill. Rulebooks are available for $1. Those interested should write Prometheus Games, P.O. Box 43450, Austin, TX 78745-0010.

Convention Calendar

*March 9-11: COASTCON '84. SF and gaming con. SJ is Gaming Guest of Honor. Contact CoastCon '84, P.O. Box 1423, Biloxi, MS 39533.

*March 16-18: ORCCON 1984. Southern California's largest strategy game convention and exposition. Contact STRATEGICON PR Dept., P.O. Box 2577, Anaheim, CA 93804.

March 16-18: TRI-CON. Gaming, SF con. Send SASE to N.C. State Gaming Society, P.O. Box 37122, Raleigh, NC 27627.

March 17-18: CENTCON 84. Gaming con. Contact Chairman Ronald E. Vincent, 471 Commonwealth Ave., New Britain, CT 06053.

*March 29-April 1: AGGIECON XV. SF con. Contact AggieCon XV, P.O. Box J-1, College Station, TX 77844.

April 6-8: CAPCON 84. Boardgaming, miniature, role-playing con. Contact Paul Riegel, 6119 E. Main St. # 202, Columbus, OH 43213.

April 13-15: CAPROCK. SF con. Contact Capcon '84, 302 E. Purdue No. 29, Lubbock, TX 79403.

SJ GAMES and SG will be attending the conventions marked above with asterisks.

Origins Update

Origins '84, in Dallas, has changed its date and location. According to Howard Barasch of the Dallas committee, plans to hold the convention at North Texas State University fell through when the university asked for a site rental fee in excess of $100,000. The new location will be Market Center North in Dallas, with two official convention hotels, approximately two miles away, and shuttle service between the hotels and the convention center. The new dates will be June 21 through 24.

Keeping Posted

A Gentle Art: Human-Moderated PBMs

by W.G. Armintrout

Welcome to "Keeping Posted," our new regular PBM column. "KP" gets off to a controversial start, but spleen-venting is not this column's only function. You'll see reviews, strategy articles, and designer's notes, too. (Even the odd deep-think essay, if I get some good ones in.)

"Keeping Posted" isn't a normal column – one staffer won't be writing it every issue. It's open to anybody who's interested in PBM and can coherently express themselves. Even if you hate play-by-mail there's room for your opinion too!

As for this issue, the following letters were edited only for clarity; nothing substantive was altered. We believe this to be a fair and balanced presentation of a problem inherent in human-moderated PBMs. I'm sure there are differing opinions, and I want to hear them.

–CF

Greetings W.G.:

I've always enjoyed your articles in *Space Gamer*, and would like to ask a few questions of you if I might. Have you played Schubel & Son's ***StarMaster*** play-by-mail game? If so, did you have any problems with the GMs losing or not recording your ships, megacities, etc.?

I've been in the game for 10 months now. I run a fith-generation empire in the Northeast galaxy that I bought from another player and a mid-second-generation empire in the sixth lower galaxy. In the time I've been playing, the GMs have made *eight* major mistakes – four cost me entire star systems.

The star systems were lost because the GMs did not record major ship and ground forces I had sent in to hold the systems. After the systems had fallen, I sent in my record sheets to the GMs to prove a mistake had been made. After *three to six weeks* I'd receive a note stating that yes, there had been a mistake; but, because the mistake involved another player, they could not give the systems back . . . and so it goes. (In one case, I had to write twice and call their office over a period of two months before I ever heard back from them.)

I've spoken to nine or ten other players that have had this same type of problem. What I'd like to know is if this type of thing is widespread, or did I just happen to talk to an atypical group?

On the same subject, just three weeks ago the GMs got into a war with a fifth-generation race – I'm only mid-second-generation in that galaxy. The Schubel & Son GMs, for some reason known only to them, had one of my small task forces attack that fifth-generation race. I've sent in the force sheets and combat sheets to prove I gave no such orders, but it's been three weeks and no reply.

Next, since the GMs got me into this war and since I've grown attached to my homeworld and don't want to lose it, I spent *$250* to buy 2.7 billion economic units from some other players to build 330 f. megacities with 1,000 Guardian Fortresses each – that's 330,000 fortresses.

I did this over three turns on special action sheets (at a cost of $3.50 per turn). On the fourth turn, I asked the GM to check the records; by this time I'd learned not to trust their records! And, lo and behold, they had no record of those f. megacities!! But it will be many weeks before I get a reply.

The two questions I'd like to ask are:

Is this typical of Schubel & Son? (I've played other PBMs and *none* of them were this bad.)

And, if this *is* typical, why haven't S&S been blasted in the game mags? Are they too powerful?

I'm really considering getting out of ***StarMaster***, but I've spent more than $380 so far and would hate to lose all that.

(name withheld)

To me, the idea of commercially-run, human-moderated PBMs – that is, games played through the mail that are operated by human referees – is fascinating.

Just a few years ago, I'd have bet that the whole idea was impossible. The human moderators would allow a game to be remarkably flexible, able to create new rules as needed. But where would you get good GMs, and how could you pay them?

Yet it was done, and it was Schubel & Son that led the way with games like ***Tribes of Crane*** and ***StarMaster***.

The major difference between human-run and computer-run PBM games is that the human-operated games can respond creatively to their players, but at the price of increased error (a properly written computer program doesn't make mistakes). The psychological difference is that a player, when things are going badly for him in a game, can blame the gamemaster – as opposed to the computer games where, as Dr. McCoy once said, you can't argue with a machine.

It's not surprising that of all the complaints I hear about PBMs, from readers of this magazine who call or write, about 99% concern themselves with gamemastered games. Of these, at least half are simply sob stories from poor losers. Another third verge on the fantastic – the gamemasters supposedly have a grand plot to stomp out one particular player, or are making a rules change just to foil someone's plans for conquest. Only a few complaints *sound* legitimate, but nobody ever has proof.

So when the editor forwarded another complaint letter, I was initially unimpressed. For one thing, it involved a company and a game that had seldom made my complaint list. The charges seemed incredible. However, the letter writer did claim to have proof – turnsheets and gamemaster notes – and when he met me at a game convention, he didn't sound like a crackpot.

Most startling of all, though, was the fact that when I sent a list of the complaints to the company, they responded immediately with a letter by certified mail. If nothing else, I had struck a nerve.

For better or worse, therefore, I suggested to Chris that he publish both letters (keeping the writer's name a secret to protect his position in the game, though both the company and I know who he is). Exactly who is right and who is wrong, and how much, I really don't pretend to know – the company is the best in its field and has always enjoyed my respect, but the complainant makes a good case. I look forward to hearing what other ***StarMaster*** players have to say on the matter – send a letter to the editor, and if Chris hears something interesting, I think he'll print it.

Having said all that, I have a few words of advice to all of the companies that run human-moderated play-by-mail games – and I'm not pointing a finger at Schubel & Son, for there are other companies out there about which I've received many more, undocumented complaints:

- **Turn-Over:** If you can't keep a stable group of gamemasters, then you'll automatically have more errors – both clerical and in interpretation of the rules. One of the reasons for high turn-over is low pay. That leads back to the economic foundations: You have to charge enough per turn to pay your gamemasters what they're worth . . . and if that prices you out of the market, then the idea was financially unfeasible in the first place.
- **Qualifications:** You don't find good gamemasters just walking down the street, and your odds of developing a good gamemaster from someone without a gaming background are not good. A good company is based on qualified, intelligent moderators. On the plus side for Schubel

September 21, 1983

Dear Mr. Armintrout,

Thank you for writing me about the problems in ***StarMaster***. I have my supervisor looking into the specific problems and I can assure you they will be taken care of to the best of our ability and very quickly.

As to the general question of errors in ***StarMaster***, I would like to say that errors, both general clerical and GM problems, are rare. I cannot in all honesty say that and I never have. Even our catalog states "The high cost and rather high error rate" are the disadvantages of gamemaster-moderated play-by-mail games. The more complex the game system and the larger the scope, the more errors occur. ***StarMaster***, with well over 2,000 positions, is by far the most complex game ever operated by anyone in the industry. Our error rate is quite high. Yet I believe our gamemasters are the very best in the industry. I believe Schubel & Son's moderation of any of its games is equal to or better than any similar scale game. In the case of ***StarMaster***, there is simply nothing to compare it to so we cannot measure whether another company does a better job of moderation. The question then becomes, does Schubel & Son do an acceptable job at moderation of ***StarMaster***? We measure this in two ways. First, by setting internal company standards, then checking turns for errors and measuring the performance of our GMs at every level against that standard over time. We have met or exceeded that subjective standard every month we have operated the game.

The second, more objective standard we use for all our games is the measure of the marketplace. Our assumption is that in the long run, if we do a poor job of moderation, people simply will not play the game. Our sales and market share will begin to fall and our competition will grow stronger. What is the measure of ***StarMaster*** and Schubel & Son on this criteria? ***StarMaster*** is by far the most successful gamemaster-moderated game in history. Large numbers of players are willing to pay very high amounts just to purchase a developed position in the game. Your letter says the quoted player paid $250.00 to another player just to start. We have heard of positions selling in the $700.00 range. New beginning positions at $5.00 per start from us are at a record level. ***StarMaster*** grosses more turn fees than any other play-by-mail game of any type. Schubel & Son Inc. has grown to be the leader in play-by-mail. Our competitors have grown in number, but not in strength. This last year showed the largest number of play-by-mail failures in history.

All this makes a very convincing argument that overall Schubel & Son Inc. and ***StarMaster*** in particular are doing a very good job at moderation. Do errors occur? Yes. Do we do everything we can to avoid them and make the best corrections we can when they do occur? I believe again the answer is yes. I believe this is all a human being can do. We will continually do all we can to improve. I firmly believe you cannot find a better moderator than Schubel & Son Inc., the leader in play-by-mail.

Sincerely yours,
George V. Schubel
President,
Schubel & Son Inc.

& Son, they have in Lori Goerlich the single most-praised gamemaster in the business . . . according to my mail basket. When you have a good GM, boast about him (or her) – that not only builds your reputation, but helps you hold on to your most talented people.

•**Computerizing:** There's a growing trend to take portions of a human-moderated game and make them computer-moderated – for instance, having all conventional combat handled by the computer. That cuts down on the time it takes to process a turn, and also cuts down on complaints (you can't talk back to the machine). Yet at the same time it tears out the whole reason for going with human moderation in the first place – the freedom to try any gambit or tactic, regardless of whether there's a rule for it. Computers make great record keepers and formulae crunchers, but they can't replace a gamemaster.

•**Conformity:** Your gamemasters *must* all be working from the same set of rules, interpreted in the same way, or you'll eventually wear out the patience of your players. When you get complaints about flip-flopping rules, get together with your staff and make sure they're all GMing in step with each other.

•**Design:** A well-made game is designed in such a way that errors are not encouraged. A badly-designed game, on the other hand, will be prone to mistakes. Information-handling and turn-processing have to be designed into a game, just like all the other rules and elements.

•**Outlook:** I'm not going to mention the company, but once upon a time this company made a rule change in their game . . . and 700 player positions simply dropped out of the game. What did the gamemasters make of this? ". . . those players (700+) left because they could no longer cheat . . ." Really? I know that players occasionally try to cheat, forge turnsheets, even counterfeit their game tokens, but a company that truly believes most of its players are out to cheat the moderators has sunk into a pit of cynicism. The players will catch on to that kind of spirit eventually, and that's not good for business.

Lastly, a company can't count forever on the goodwill of its clients. Sure, a player who has sunk a few hundred dollars or a few years into a game is going to stick with it in the face of rules changes and declining moderation – the game has become part of his life. His friends are there. Part of his self-image has become tied in with his player position, his empire or fiefdom. He wants to believe things will change. A company can buy a lot of time simply by promising "we'll make improvements" or "we're trying to turn things around" . . . but eventually there'll be a turning point past which the players can't be pushed. They'll jump ship, and that sort of thing can be contagious.

Space Gamer – both the Texas staff and the contributing editors – can't promise to act as ombudsman for the entire PBM industry. Not every letter can be published as a letter to the editor, nor can every complaint be looked into. But we do want to hear from you – especially, at the moment, on the subject of ***StarMaster*** – and if something is worth it, then we'll print it (along with a response from the company involved, if they have anything to say).

Most game companies run good games, and whatever problems exist can be solved if players and companies will listen to each other and work together.

SG

SO YA THINK YOU'RE FAST, EH, KID?

"Fast? You bet! Your gaming software is shipped within 24 hours. Orders received by 3 pm are shipped same day. Nobody beats KID LIGHTNING!"

APPLE II/II+ Disk	LIST PRICE	OUR PRICE
BRODERBUND		
Galactic Empire	24.95	18.71
Galactic Revolution	24.95	18.71
Galactic Trader	24.95	18.71
Tawala's Last Redoubt	29.95	22.46
Arcade Machine	59.95	44.96
Choplifter	34.95	26.21
Serpentine	34.95	26.21
Sky Blazer	31.95	23.96
DATAMOST		
Aztec	39.95	29.96
Missing Ring	29.95	22.46
Mars Cars	29.95	22.46
Pandora's Box	29.95	22.46
Spectre	29.95	22.46
Swashbuckler	34.95	26.21
Thief	29.95	22.46
EPYX		
Dragon's Eye	29.95	22.46
Hellfire Warrior	39.95	29.96
Invasion Orion	19.95	14.96
Morloc's Tower	19.95	14.96
Star Warrior	39.95	29.96
Rescue at Rigel	29.95	22.46
Temple of Apshai	39.95	29.96
MUSE SOFTWARE		
Castle Wolfenstein	29.95	22.46
Caverns of Freitag	29.95	22.46
Robot War	29.95	22.46
SIERRA ON-LINE		
Timezone	99.95	74.96
Ultima II	59.95	44.96
Ulysses	34.95	26.21
Sabotage	24.95	18.71
SIR-TECH		
Wizardry	49.95	37.46
Knights of Diamonds	34.95	26.21
ATARI 400/800 Disk		
MICROCOMPUTER GAMES		
Empire of the Overmind	35.00	26.25
G.F.S. Sorceress	35.00	26.25
Space Station Zulu	25.00	18.75
Telengard	28.00	21.00
Voyager	25.00	18.75
STRATEGIC SIMULATIONS		
Cosmic Balance	39.95	29.96
Cytron Masters	39.95	29.96
Galactic Adventures	59.95	44.96
Shattered Alliance	39.95	29.96

Write for a complete listing of software. Specify machine and disk or cassette.

Add $2.00 for postage and handling. Make check or money order payable to:

Lightning MicroGames

"Tell 'em KID LIGHTNING sent ya."

Dept. S P.O. Box 59701 Dallas TX 75229

PBM Update

Adventures By Mail

Company News: At Origins '83, there was considerable discussion of the problems faced by Canadian players of U.S.-based PBM games. To solve some of these problems, we are very interested in starting an "all Canadian" game of ***Capitol*** with one turn per month (instead of three). In order to begin such a game, we need help. Any Canadian players interested in joining such a game or in helping us recruit other Canadian players should write us for more information.

GAMES Magazine chose ***Beyond the Stellar Empire*** as one of the top 100 games of 1983. It was the only PBM game so honored.

Beyond the Stellar Empire

The USS Second Fleet engaged the most powerful Flagritz fleet ever encountered. Twenty-one USS ships attacked two baseships, a scout and a captured human ship. The terrible results: Six USS ships destroyed plus several severely damaged. The Flagritz lost the captured human ship, saw their scout crippled but not captured, and their baseships took a tremendous amount of damage, yet were still functional. The USS fleet has returned to its home port for repairs and R&R.

The FET colony LORIT was vanquished by natives, possibly aided by some unknown entity. The FET Marduk, first to arrive on the scene, is picking up the pieces.

SSL colony Korlus is being investigated by the ISP on allegations of genocide. Emite the Clean, Head Squeek Of All The Burrows, estimated that the Lemites killed numbered in excess of 100,000. "If I don't get that murderous governor, my pups will!" Emite said.

Capitol

Game 1: IVAKA's position of first place is quite solid. ZXY and SLEEN are in second and third respectively, but are not close to catching IVAKA. PI VI CE, CHATAN, ALDRYAMI, GROGNARDS, and CHITIN are expanding rapidly.

Game 2: The WEEBLES are in first, but just barely. All 12 races are quite active, with several minor skirmishes occurring. The ETTINITES look tough.

Game 3: Setups are being processed.

Warboid World

The number of shutdowns is rapidly increasing in the first and second groups of games. In fact, several games have had about half of the players shut down and at least one player has shut down two enemy STIC's in the same game.

Schubel & Son

Company News: We are pleased to announce the opening of our fourth ***StarMaster*** galaxy, the Southern Galaxy, and that work has begun on ***StarMaster II***, which will be an updated and improved variant of the original ***StarMaster***. The release of ***StarMaster II*** is expected in late 1984.

StarMaster

In the Central galaxy, the might Yarki Theocracy attacked the homeworld of the Shi'ar Divine Meld. After defeating the planet's naval defenses, the Yarki telepaths landed a force of 20 Fanatics, 10 Sorcerer-Guards and 10 of the advanced Biologist units. The Yarki planned to systematically sweep the planet with their Fanatic and Sorcerer-Guard units and call in their elite Biologist units to crush enemy strongholds. The Shi'ar defending units, 34 Warrior-Guards and 27 Legionnaire-Guards, were quickly located and eliminated by the Yarki after heavy fighting. With the fall of the last defenders, the Shi'ar leadership detonated their stockpile of 50 Hydrogen bombs and 10 Cobalt Fusion bombs. The terrific explosions that followed destroyed 100 megacities and two Yarki Sorcerer-Guards. The planet had fallen!

–Duane Wilcoxson

Central Texas Computing

Company News: First, another major rules expansion has just been completed. The Etuel may be able to help players who ask for specific items. Second, rising costs have forced us to increase fees, effective January 1, 1984. Setup (including two turns) will be $11.00, and each succeeding turn will be $3.50. Last, but not least, you can expect Quadrants IX-XII to begin opening in the first quarter of 1984, due to demand.

Universe III

Quadrant V: The Etuel appear to be introducing new equipment to make colony operation less dangerous. Rumors abound of a major battle over an inhabitable planet on the west side of the quadrant. It is not clear whether this is a limited action or part of an all-out inter-alliance war, but none of the alien races appear to be taking part at this time.

Quadrant VI: Several colonies have begun large-scale production of military equipment. It is not clear at this time whether this production is for defensive purposes or whether it presages some form of aggressive action against other Terran colonies.

Quadrant VII: Several alliances are placing beacon nets to cover the quadrant. According to the Etuel, these beacons are used to track the presence of starships virtually anywhere in the quadrant, and will be a vital part of any future conflict here. No player has yet succeeded in finding and destroying a beacon.

Quadrant VIII: The Alar continue to reject attempts to contact them, as do the Regajians and Muar. There is much speculation over whether or not these races have found a way to hide entire star systems. If so, it is unclear when or how they intend to make their presence known. If not, where are they?

Clemens and Associates

Company News: While there are still openings in quadrants I through IV for players who wish to join their friends who are already playing ***Universe II***, we have added a new quadrant, XXI, and it is completely different from the others. The first ships have just been assigned in this new space.

We have made arrangements to start an entirely separate game of ***Universe II*** for players in Australia and surrounding areas. They will compete only with players having the same postal times to the USA. Any players interested may contact: Chameleon Games, G.P.O. Box 2302, Sydney, 2001, Australia.

Universe II

Quadrant I: The war between the Regajian Empire and the Unity Alliance is in a stage of regrouping. Both sides seem to be preparing for a decisive battle. In the Harris area, the ILOC forces counter-attacked with devastating effect. One UES ship was completely destroyed. The sacrifices by the brave UES commanders have enabled the Etuel to complete the defensive force fields around Harris, Merga and Alkaid.

Quadrant II: The Ixtli attack on the Etuel star system of Alula has again been broken. One outlaw ship, the Falcon, was virtually destroyed by the UES Knights defending Alula. Reinforcements for both sides are arriving. Regajian Empire ships have been sighted in the Zosma area. Their presence raises many questions.

Quadrant III: The Unity Alliance is also at war in this quadrant. Pitched battles are raging around the star system at AM42, with the Unity ship Wahoowa scoring the first kill on an Order of Lafitte ship. Meanwhile, colonization activity proceeds at a rapid pace in the Nocer area. Little conflict has been reported in this area.

Quadrant IV: There are unconfirmed reports that the Triad Alliance bases have been attacked by LOTDP forces. It is unknown if this was only a raid or the start of a major war. STA ships have begun probing the perimeter of the Unity Confederation. In the Muar Empire, MSS ships have succeeded in driving most of the UES ships from their Empire.

Quadrant XXI: Starships have begun trading at Gysarme. Nearby, starship 4066D (*Starling*) was the first to discover an uncivilized star system in this quadrant. It is reported that starships belonging to the Cetusville Alliance have been sighted near Putjor.

–Jon Clemens

Advertisers Index

Advent Games 33
Adventures By Mail 9
Argonaut Games 34
Castle Creations 6
Central Texas Computing . . . . . IFC
The Compleat Strategist 16
FASA Corporation 32
4 Sight 12
Galactic Trader (Retailers) . . . . . IBC
Game Designers' Workshop 30
Gamelords, Ltd. 34
Graaf Simulations 35
Grenadier Models Inc. 17
Hero Games 37
Lightning Microgames 43
Phoenix Publications 20
The Quartermaster . . . . . IBM
Ral Partha Imports 16
The Round Table 32
Schubel & Son 10
Steve Jackson Games . . . . . IFM
Victory Games 3
Warcon '84 14
West End Games . . . . . BC
Zorph Enterprises 35

GALACTIC TRADER

YANKEE DOODLE GAME & HOBBY

100s of boardgames – 1000s of miniatures, paints, accessories –
Write *Catalog $1.50* or call
6831 Longview Road 816 /
Kansas City, MO 64134 761-1113

The King's Crown

6860 West 105th Street
Overland Park, Kansas 66212
(913) 341-6619
Midwest's Finest Selection of
Military and Fantasy Games
Books, Figures, and Accessories
Free Catalog and Discounts Available

THE TIN SOLDIER

9 Court House Place, Dept F
Springfield, Mass. 01103
(413) 737-8543
catalog available for $1.00
(refunded on first order)
phone orders accepted with
VISA or MasterCard

THE GAME SHOP

3340 Highland Road 504 /
Baton Rouge, LA 70802 387-6886

Louisiana's most complete
adventure game headquarters

Catalogue $1.50

THE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST

We've Got It All!
Mon. to Sat. 10:30-6:00 Thurs. till 9:00

11 East 33rd Street
NYC 10016 212 / 685-3880
Mail order hotline: 800 / 225-4344

THE LITTLE SHOP OF WAR

5 Merriman Road 216 /
Akron, OH 44303 374-0814

Ohio's most complete
adventure game headquarters

Catalogue $1.50

THE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST

We've Got It All!
Tue. to Sat. 11:00-7:00 Thurs. till 9:00

215 Glenridge Avenue
Montclair, NJ 07042 201 / 744-6622
Mail order hotline: 800 / 225-4344

THE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST

We've Got It All!
Mon to Sat. 10:30-6:00 Thurs. till 9:00

320 West 57th Street
NYC 10016 212 / 582-1272
Mail order hotline: 800 / 225-4344

THE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST

We've Got It All!
Tue. to Sat. 11:00-7:00 Thurs. till 9:00

5406 Stirling Road
Davie, FL 33314 305 / 961-5660
Mail order hotline: 800 / 225-4344

ALCOVE HOBBY SHOP

2424 N. Woodward
Royal Oak, MI 48073
313/545-6237

Finest selection of games & figures

Adventure Gaming Specialists

GAMEMASTERS HOBBIES, INC.

4627 Geary Blvd.
San Francisco, CA 94118
415 / 387-4118

Catalog available for $2.00 – Phone orders accepted with Visa or MasterCard

FLYING BUFFALO GAMES

915 South 52nd Street, No. 3
Tempe, AZ 85281 602 / 966-4727

Send for free catalogue

THE FLOPPY DISK

DISCOUNT SOFTWARE
For Wargamers and Fantasy Gamers

Free catalog – Specify computer type
P.O. Box 5392-S 5416 Vantage Ave. #2
No. Hollywood, CA No. Hollywood, CA
91616-5392 (213) 762-3123

GAMES OF BERKELEY

2110 Addison Street
Downtown Berkeley
California 94704
(415) 843-9436

ARCHAIC HOBBIES

Specializing in fantasy and science fiction role-playing games

1700 South Solano 505 /
Las Cruces, NM 88001 522-2335

THE VOYAGER SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY SERIES $10.00

BUG-EYED MONSTERS

They Want Our Women!

On silent grav sleds, the alien creatures slide through the forest, readying their lasers and stunners, drooling slightly in anticipation. They choose their first target: a little clapboard house nestled in the woods above town. They attack. The sounds of lasers and stunners are soon met by cries of fear and rage. Wild with lust, they fail to notice when one human makes it to a car and careens away to rouse the citizenry of the small town against the alien threat.

Ugly, slobbering, bug-eyed monsters! They land in remote American towns and make off with women.

BUG-EYED MONSTERS is the new West End release by Greg Costikyan, designer of the successful *Creature That Ate Sheboygan.*™ In this game, Greg returns to the "Creature" genre, bringing a flying saucer with menacing monsters to the quiet remote American town of Freedom, New Hampshire.

One player, as the monster, must attempt to kidnap the earthling women (the most beautiful in the universe). The other player must rally the citizens of the town to stop the repulsive invaders and save his womenfolk from a fate worse then death.

A special "Aliens Kidnap Presidential Hopeful" scenario is also provided. Dwight Eisenhower, campaigning for the New Hampshire primary, along with an entourage of state troopers and secret service men, is surprised by a party of bug-eyed monsters. Will they kidnap America's war hero?

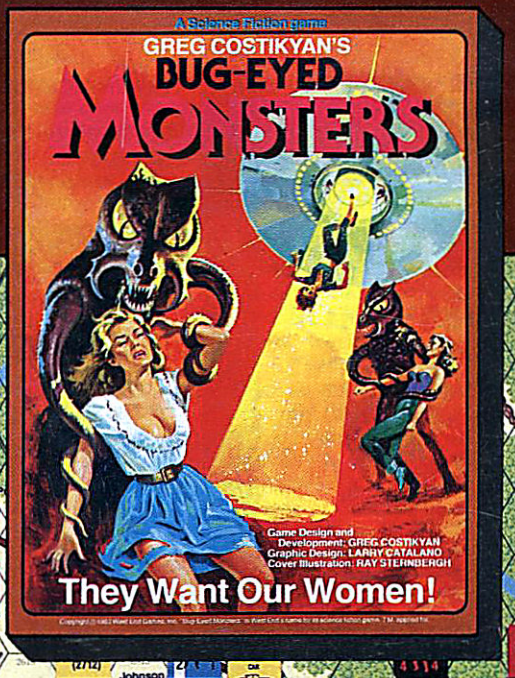
A simple but elegant game system with clear brief rules makes BUG-EYED MONSTERS a good introduction to adventure gaming, but its subject and smooth play will appeal to the hardcore gamer as well.

THE DESIGNER

Greg Costikyan is the designer of nine published games, including THE CREATURE THAT ATE SHEBOYGAN,™ SWORDS AND SORCERY,™ DEATH MAZE,™ RETURN OF THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT,™ and TRAIL BLAZER.™

The above titles are all the trademarks of TSR Inc. with the exception of TRAIL BLAZER which is the trademark of Metagaming.

- one 22″ x 17″ game map
- 160 full-color, back-printed precision die cut 5/8″ counters.
- one 8-page rules booklet
- two dice and full-color game box (1″ wide bookshelf size box)



WEST END GAMES

Complexity: Low
Solitaire Suitability: Low
Players: Two
Game Scale: Individual Person
Playing Time: An hour or less for experienced gamers